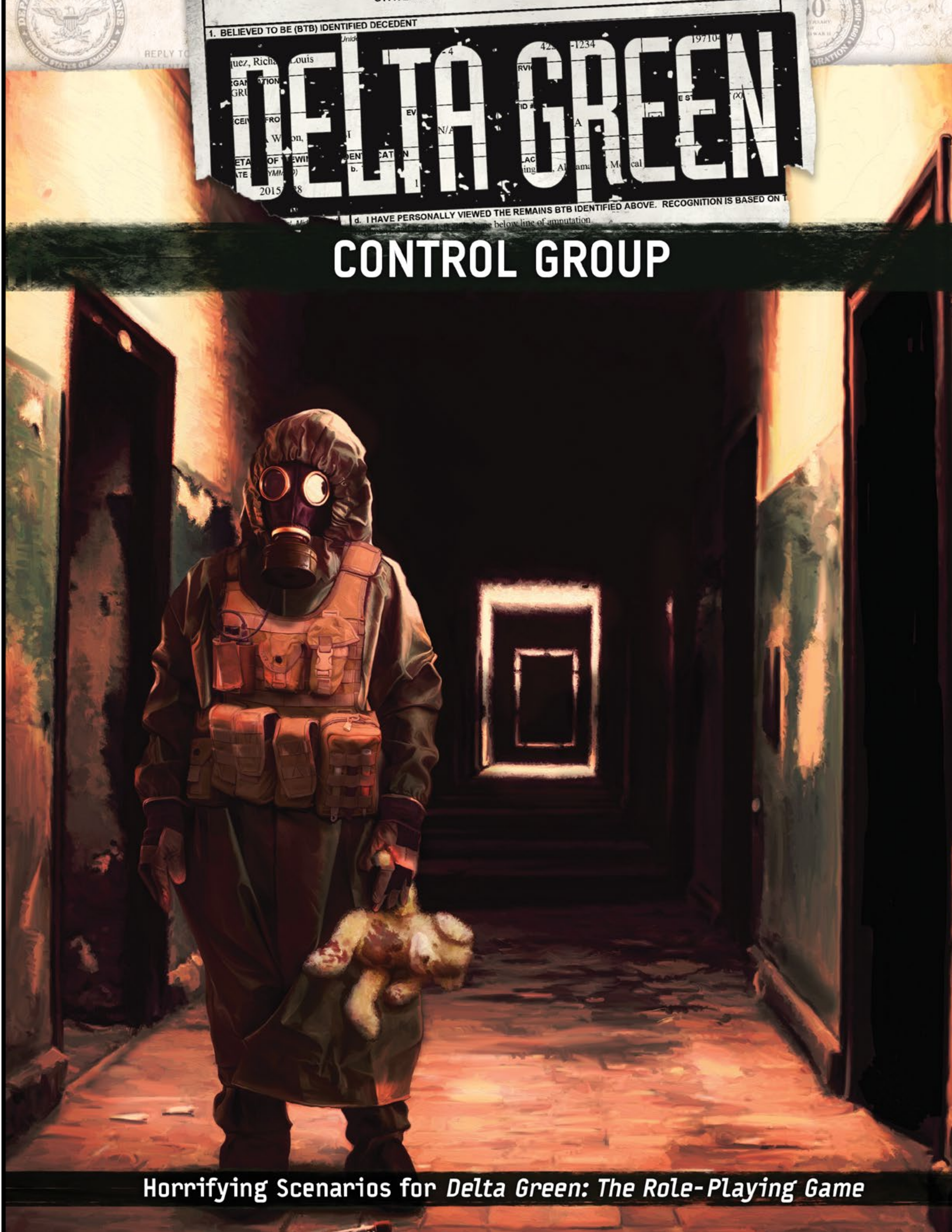

DELTA GREEN

CONTROL GROUP

Horrifying Scenarios for *Delta Green: The Role-Playing Game*

RESTRICTED

THE DEADLY LIGHT OF REVELATION

Born of the U.S. government's 1928 raid on the degenerate coastal town of Innsmouth, Massachusetts, the covert agency known as Delta Green opposes the forces of darkness with honor but without glory. Delta Green agents fight to save humanity from unnatural horrors—often at a shattering personal cost.

The team behind the eight-time ENnie Award-winning **DELTA GREEN: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME** presents a collection of original adventures to introduce players to Delta Green. These operations will lead future agents to new heights of cosmic terror.

- **BLACKSAT** follows a team of NASA astronauts and a pair of strange civilians into space in 2010. A simple satellite repair leads them to truths of mathematics and physics beyond all human wonder and fear.
- **NIGHT VISIONS** tracks U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan in 2011. A diplomatic patrol takes them to Gath Valley, a corner of the country that everyone tries to ignore—a place of deep shadows and ancient hungers.
- **SICK AGAIN** sees a team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention rushing to rural Arizona in 2012. Investigating a strange viral outbreak may expose them to threats beyond time itself.
- **WORMWOOD ARENA** brings together survivors of the prior adventures—if there are any—as Agents of Delta Green. A harmless-seeming Kansas cult's new pamphlet sports a sigil of unnatural portent. The Agents must investigate the cult, perhaps even infiltrate it, and stop a catastrophic incursion before it begins.

DELTA GREEN: CONTROL GROUP is written by Greg Stolze and Shane Ivey, and illustrated by Dennis Detwiller.

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This is a work of fiction

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DELTA GREEN

// Control Group //

ARC DREAM PUBLISHING PRESENTS *DELTA GREEN: CONTROL GROUP*
BY GREG STOLZE & SHANE IVEY
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Introduction

From America's endless wars to the spread of weird diseases, from a tiny cult's unwitting evil to an ill-advised flight into space, *Control Group* is built to introduce new players and new Agents to the terrors of Delta Green.

”BLACKSAT” takes the players to a rarely-seen part of Delta Green's world: low Earth orbit. A strange satellite must receive a kind of attunement that no electronic transmission can deliver. "BLACKSAT" includes pregenerated Agents, ready to play.

"Night Visions" presents new Agents in an entirely different encounter, a war zone where an ancient power hungers and festers and violence is all but inevitable. "Night Visions" includes pregenerated Agents, ready to play.

"Sick Again" explores an unnatural threat to public health as Agents bring the full strength of a federal quarantine to bear on a desperate southwestern town. "Sick Again" includes pregenerated Agents, ready to play.

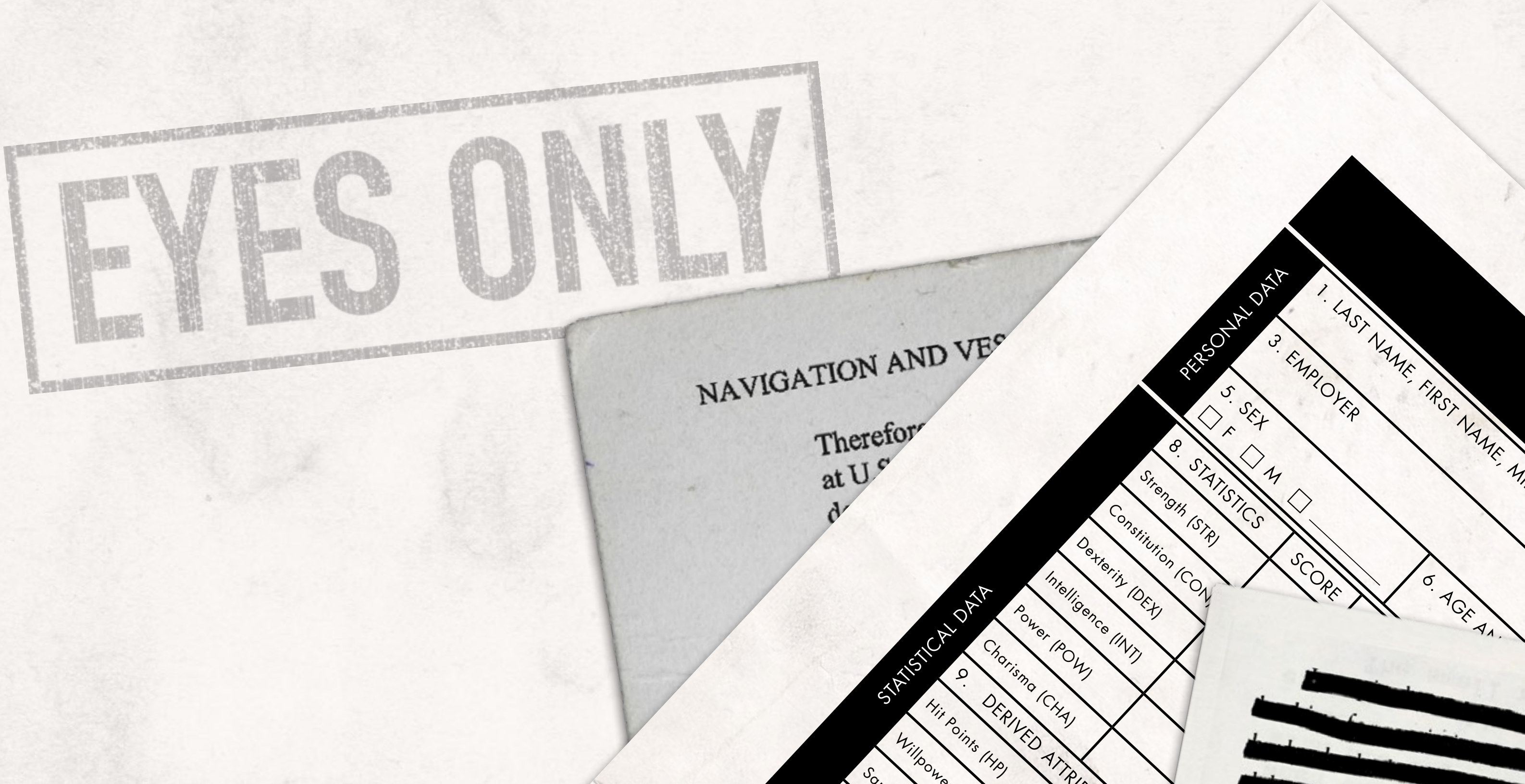
Finally, "Wormwood Arena" brings together the survivors of prior operations and, if necessary, new Agents that may be created by the players. They must investigate what looks like an unnatural cult and stop a catastrophe before it can strike.

Each *Control Group* operation takes place in a specific year and location: Kennedy Space Center on 12 JUL 2010. Kunar Province on 3 OCT 2011. Rural Arizona on 21 NOV 2012. A Kansas farm on 5 AUG 2013. The first three dates are dictated by historical (or fictional) events. The Space Shuttle program ended in 2011. The U.S. Army's assignments in Afghanistan were in constat flux. The events of "Sick Again" start with a major 2012 event described in the *Handler's Guide*.

With a little work, though, you could change the dates. In your campaign world, Combat Outpost Honaker Miracle may have lingered for years under U.S. forces. The players in "BLACKSAT" may take the role of astronauts taking off from a private-sector launchpad, perhaps owned by one of the many tech firms anonymously owned by the Program's friends at March Technologies. The inciting event of "Sick Again" could have been delayed years for reasons no human mind will ever comprehend.

It is your world. Its horrors are yours to reveal.

Shane Ivey
5 APR 2019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8. STATISTICS
SCORE
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Charisma (CHA)
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Hit Points (HP)
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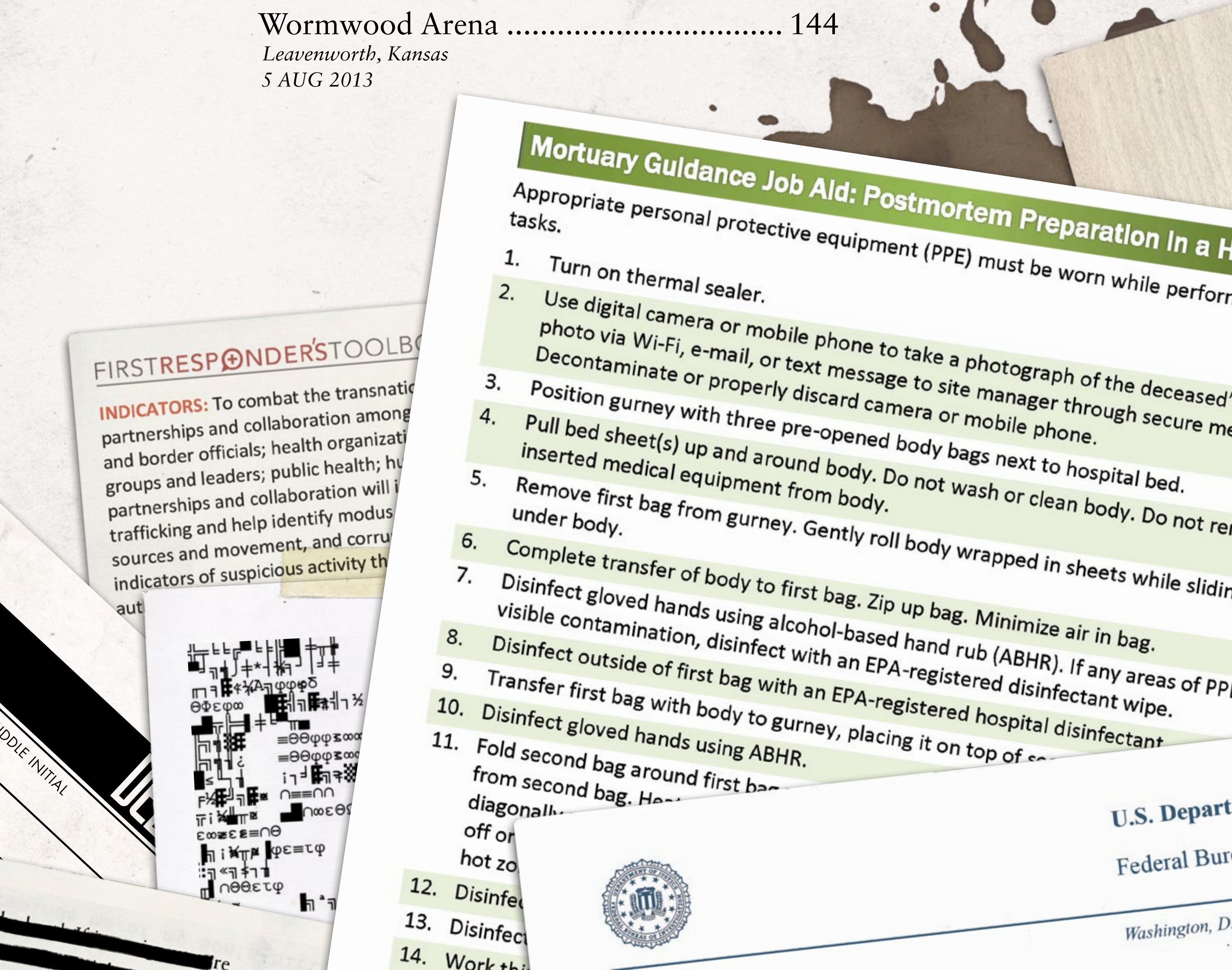
5 AUG 2013



Mortuary Guidance Job Aid: Postmortem Preparation In a H

Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn while perfor
tasks.

1. Turn on thermal sealer.
2. Use digital camera or mobile phone to take a photograph of the deceased'
photo via Wi-Fi, e-mail, or text message to site manager through secure me
Decontaminate or properly discard camera or mobile phone.
3. Position gurney with three pre-opened body bags next to hospital bed.
4. Pull bed sheet(s) up and around body. Do not wash or clean body. Do not re
inserted medical equipment from body.
5. Remove first bag from gurney. Gently roll body wrapped in sheets while slidin
under body.
6. Complete transfer of body to first bag. Zip up bag. Minimize air in bag.
7. Disinfect gloved hands using alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR). If any areas of PP
visible contamination, disinfect with an EPA-registered disinfectant wipe.
8. Disinfect outside of first bag with an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant
9. Transfer first bag with body to gurney, placing it on top of s
10. Disinfect gloved hands using ABHR.
11. Fold second bag around first bag
from second bag. He
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12. Disinfe
13. Disinfec
14. Work th

FIRSTRESPONDER'STOOLB

INDICATORS: To combat the transnati
partnerships and collaboration among
and border officials; health organizati
groups and leaders; public health; hu
partnerships and collaboration will i
trafficking and help identify modus
sources and movement, and corru
indicators of suspicious activity th
aut

U.S. Depart
Federal Bur
Washington, D.

12 JUL 2010

// BLACKSAT //

McDIVITT: “Come on. Let’s get back in here before it gets dark.”

WHITE: “It’s the saddest moment of my life.”

—Ed White II and James McDivitt, as White performs NASA’s first spacewalk

Introduction

NASA always has more people willing to risk death for glory than missions to fill. When the five astronaut protagonists of BLACKSAT get the call that they've been assigned a classified, military space shuttle mission, it is the chance of a lifetime. They are not yet agents of Delta Green.

They are headed for space to repair a secret spy satellite code-named BLACKSAT. They do not know that this satellite was built with unnatural components scavenged from the MAJESTIC program, and is beyond the ability of astronauts to repair. The player characters (PCs) must take unready passengers into the most dangerous environment known to humanity. And their passengers' mission is not to repair the satellite, but to destroy it with the only tool that can do it any harm: the unnatural power of hypergeometry.

Horror is all about doing the best you can with bad options. In space, anything not on the flight plan is a bad option.

Flight Personnel

We refer to all NASA personnel on this flight as astronauts.

- **LT. COL. MICHAEL SPAY, USAF:** mission commander
- **MAJ. DIRK MCMILLAN, USAF:** pilot
- **CAPT. DAN HAMLET, USAF:** mission specialist
- **LT. COMMANDER LUKE BELTON, USN:** mission specialist
- **DEIRDRE TURNER, M.D.:** flight surgeon

Oh Eight Hundred

Before the operation begins, each player should pick any character from the list of astronauts: Lt. Colonel Spay, Major McMillan, Dr. Turner, Lt. Commander Belton, or Captain Hamlet. Their character sheets are at the end of this operation. Explain the expectations of astronauts. It is 2010 and the shuttle program is showing its age, but it has not yet been scuttled.

The astronauts have been training for a satellite repair mission for 18 months, but the schedule and purpose have been opaque. That indicates this is a secret mission, which is not all that unusual.

Early one morning, each receives a call from Paul Scalzo, a NASA administrator, asking to meet at 0800 (8:00 a.m.) at the Launch Control Center, Conference Room C. Scalzo's familiar voice sounds unusually worried. He does not give details, insisting that everything will be explained in the briefing.

The astronauts go to the Launch Control Center on a small bus. Let the players chat and establish character, so that everyone learns the other PCs' names, specialties, and personalities. Play up the fact that the flight personnel have trained together for over a year and are extremely familiar with one another.

Briefing

When the astronauts arrive at Conference Room C, they see Scalzo talking to Colonel Aaron Woolrich, a familiar Air Force officer. Woolrich has overseen parts of their training, appearing from time to time, but never directly interacting with the astronauts.

Two men in unadorned jumpsuits sit glumly at the table as well. One is chubby-cheeked and looks like he is going to vomit. His jumpsuit is stretched over bulging thighs and a swollen belly. The other is scarecrow thin, with thinning white hair and a deeply seamed face. His expression is resigned.

Scalzo introduces Colonel Woolrich. Woolrich salutes crisply and offers a firm handshake to each astronaut, greeting them by name and mouthing pleasantries about what an honor it is to work with them.

Woolrich introduces the strangers as Mr. Bruce Weintraub and Mr. Pierce O'Neil. He says that they are read onto BLACKSAT, so matters may be discussed freely in front of them. Woolrich asks the astronauts to verbally confirm what they confirmed in writing months ago, that they agree to the mission at hand, whatever its details. Then he explains the mission.

Woolrich says a classified United States defense satellite in orbit, code-named BLACKSAT, needs repair and recalibration. The astronauts are to escort

Weintraub, or O'Neil as an alternate, on a covert shuttle flight to the satellite so they can effect that repair and recalibration.

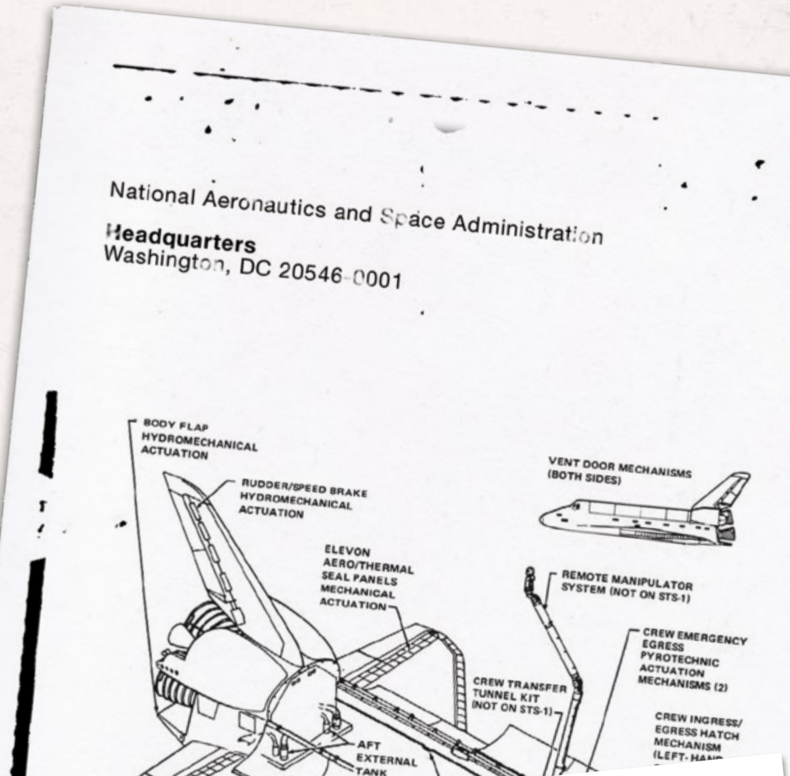
BLACKSAT's orbital height is 523 kilometers, and it is moving at seven kilometers per second. Commander McMillan's mission is to guide the craft into a close and synchronized orbit where Belton and Hamlet can escort Weintraub or O'Neil to the satellite. Woolrich says they cannot bring the satellite into the bay or use the shuttle remote arm. The techniques and technologies that they will use are classified separately from BLACKSAT. The astronauts are not cleared for those. The shuttle will be loaded with three Manned Maneuvering Unit (MMU) rigs to allow for one of the civilians to maneuver under escort by the two mission specialists.

The repairs begin in five days. Liftoff is in 48 hours.

Woolrich asks if there are any questions. If the players have none, gently suggest that this mission is atypical in any number of ways and that anyone who makes an **INT×5** roll can think of one that you suggest.

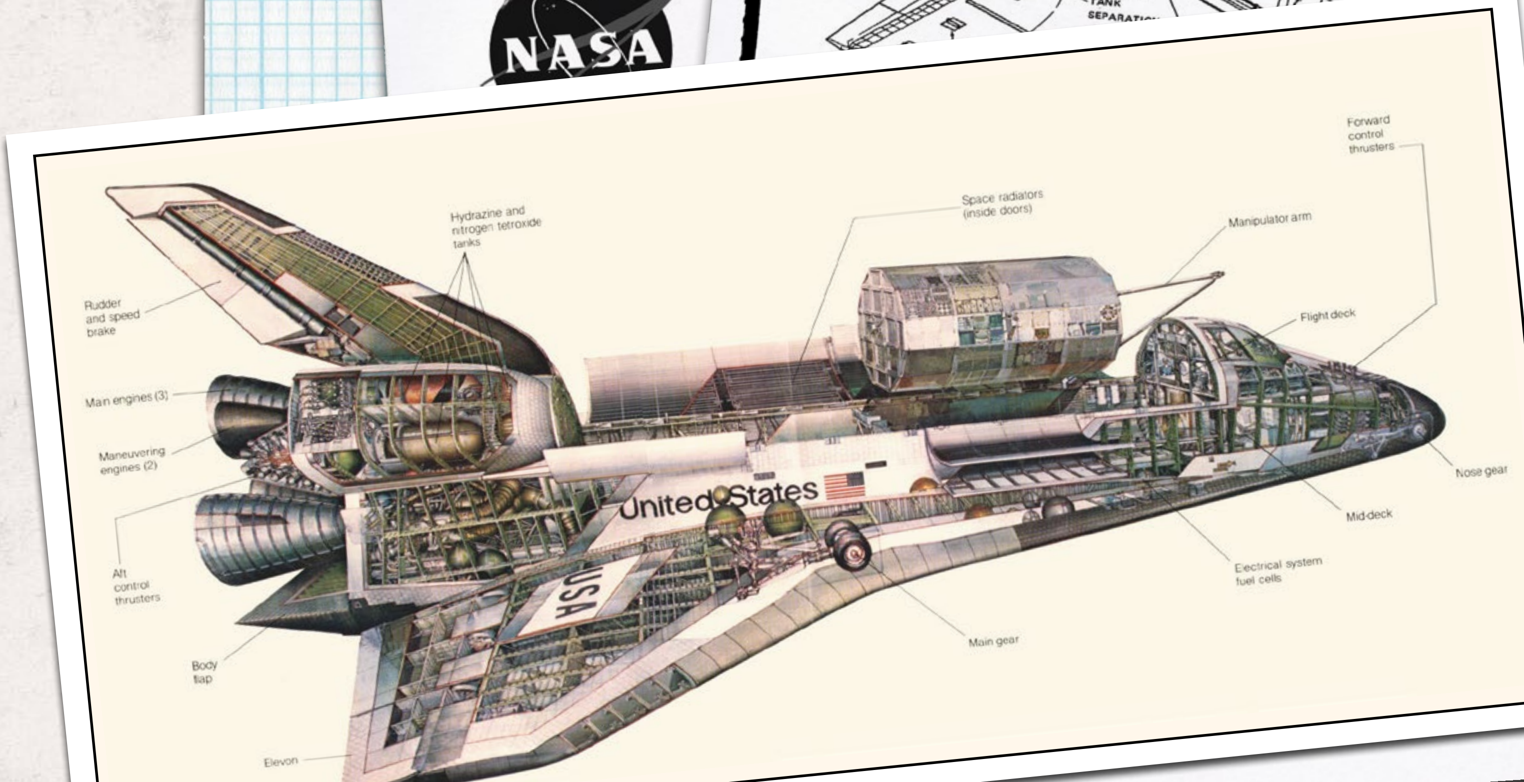
Q: What does BLACKSAT do?

BLACKSAT is a deniable anti-satellite weapon platform. If the Russians or the Chinese put anything unacceptable into orbit, BLACKSAT can degrade its functionality, interfere with its communications, and gradually decay its orbit until it goes offline. It is not dangerous to human beings, nor to anything flying under its own power with a human at the stick.



National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546-0001

BODY FLAP HYDROMECHANICAL ACTUATION
RUDDER/SPEED BRAKE HYDROMECHANICAL ACTUATION
ELEVON AERO/THERMAL SEAL PANELS MECHANICAL ACTUATION
VENT DOOR MECHANISMS (BOTH SIDES)
REMOTE MANIPULATOR SYSTEM (NOT ON STS-1)
CREW EMERGENCY EGRESS PYROTECHNIC ACTUATION MECHANISMS (2)
CREW TRANSFER TUNNEL KIT (NOT ON STS-1)
CREW INGRESS/EGRESS HATCH MECHANISM
AFT EXTERNAL TANK



Forward control thrusters
Space radiators (inside doors)
Hydrazine and nitrogen tetroxide tanks
Manipulator arm
Flight deck
Rudder and speed brake
Main engines (3)
Maneuvering engines (2)
Nose gear
United States
USA
Mid-deck
Aft control thrusters
Electrical system fuel cells
Main gear
Body flap
Elevon

Q: Is there a threat?

Woolrich says that the astronauts will be informed of any and all dangers that they are cleared to know. He assures them that they are doing their country a great service by keeping BLACKSAT primed.

Q: Are Weintraub and O'Neil ready for this?

Woolrich says they are willing, and they are the only ones who can fix BLACKSAT, but they are not astronauts. That's why they need the astronauts' help.

Weintraub breaks in to say he suffers from fibromyalgia but controls it with quercetin.

Turner knows that fibromyalgia means terrible joint pain and sensitivity. It is often associated with depression or ADHD. The acceleration of a shuttle launch is going to be agonizing. As for quercetin, it is a natural flavinoid, probably without side effects. It has no therapeutic benefits.

Q: What are Weintraub and O'Neil's qualifications for this mission? Any flight training or deep-sea diving experience?

Woolrich insists that no one but these men can fix the BLACKSAT, but that they have no flight training. O'Neil has done some diving on vacation (once).

Weintraub breaks in to say that only O'Neil fully comprehends the "Courtis differentials," a phrase familiar to none of the astronauts. Woolrich tersely cuts him off by saying that information is ADAKITE clearance only. Weintraub immediately demurs and stops speaking.

Anyone who asks for a **HUMINT** roll can attempt to read the subtext of Weintraub's outburst and Woolrich's interruption. Succeed or fail, Weintraub looks like someone eager to talk about his work. With a success, Woolrich and O'Neil look surprised and uncomfortable that Weintraub is so open about it.

Woolrich emphasizes that one of the civilian experts needs to get close enough to BLACKSAT to effect repairs using classified technology. This will require a spacewalk. Together, they are 50% of everyone on Earth qualified for the repairs. That part of the job cannot be handed over to one of the astronauts. It is highly restricted.

If pressed for details, O'Neil and Weintraub explain that they are mathematicians who specialize in the equations of exotic particle reactions. Woolrich, O'Neil, and Weintraub begin to talk about "delinear decay arcs," "baryon integration," and "meta-dimensional mechanics" without explaining what they are going to attempt in orbit.

Q: How much time do Weintraub and O'Neil need once they're spacewalking?

O'Neil expects the repairs to take about 30 minutes. No more than one hour, certainly. O'Neil believes that if he cannot calculate the transformation within one hour, more time probably will not help.

Scuttlebutt

Ask each player to review their character's Bonds and motivations, and invent one or two new motivations that seem to fit. Make sure the players know that a Bond can protect their **SAN** but at the expense of the Bond and **WP**, while motivations can help them regain **WP**.

With launch imminent, characters may want to have a difficult talk with a loved one such as a Bond or indulge a motivation. They can do that without rolling. Don't let it drag. Get a few good lines in and then cut to someone else.

Belton, Hamlet, and Turner have their hands full for the next two days training and examining O'Neil an Weintraub. McMillan and Spay have a little more time. They may try to find out more about their mystery mission, or Woolrich and the others, or BLACKSAT.

Background on Woolrich, Weintraub, and O'Neil

Some characters may hit the library, the Internet, or a basement filled with cabinets, searching for clues about their new BLACKSAT comrades. The exact test required depends on where they search and how.

The operation does not give stats or skills for Weintraub or O'Neil. They generally fail at anything unrelated to their esoteric specialties.

Should any astronaut fail at gathering information, it means Scalzo has caught them at it, in one way or another. He tells them in no uncertain terms to quit digging. He assures them that he'll keep a lid on the snooping this time, but if they keep at it, there's no way he can keep it under the rug.

WOOLRICH: Any of the astronauts can get background on Woolrich without a roll. Woolrich came up through anti-communications operations, did administrative work at Tinker AFB in Oklahoma, and got an M.S. degree in aerospace engineering from California State University at Long Beach. Any astronaut who succeeds at a **Bureaucracy** or **Military Science** (**Air**) test uncovers a 1989 assignment to Edwards AFB in California. The details of Woolrich's career are highly classified after that.

WEINTRAUB: An undergraduate at Harvey Mudd College in 1993, Bruce Weintraub dominated the William Lowell Putnam Mathematical Competition and won a graduate tuition scholarship to Harvard, where he wrote his thesis on "Para-Dimensional Matrix Collapse Functions." After graduating Harvard in 1998, he dropped off the face of the Earth. Finding more information requires having **Bureaucracy** or **Science** (**Mathematics**) at 40% or higher, or a successful **Bureaucracy** or **Science** (**Mathematics**) roll.

Successful **Bureaucracy** indicates that he moved to Severn, Maryland, a few short miles from Fort Meade, the headquarters of the National Security Agency.

Successful **Science** (**Mathematics**) wrings some strange insights out of "Para-Dimensional Matrix Collapse Functions." The math is focused on the indicacity of numbers—a measure of how much they indicate what they are attached to—and suggests that there may be ancillary data unrelated to the measured traits. It's terribly obscure, but seems to indicate that the "thingness of things" can be altered through mathematical description. A character who makes this connection loses 0/1 **SAN** from the unnatural.

O'NEIL: There are eight people on Facebook named Pierce O'Neil, and none of them are the guy in the conference room. Military and academic sources turn up nothing relevant.

If the characters take a good photograph of O'Neil (and Pierce is quite shy about having his image captured), they might have some luck. A character who has **Computer Science** at 30% or higher or succeeds at a roll worms it through an image-based search engine. Out pops a picture of him in the background at a security conference called "Black Hats and Black Ops: The Future of Security in the Information Age." He is identified there as Albert Kannessinger, and apparently he moderated a closed session entitled "The Challenges of Porous Identity." Googling Albert Kannessinger turns up a newspaper report indicating that someone with that name was arrested in 1985 for attempting to burgle a Hindu temple in Indiana. If asked about any of this, O'Neil stonewalls with a well-practiced poker face. The astronauts may get more details about him later; see **CONVERSATIONS** on page 18.

Gossip

Chatting up a NASA co-worker and casually steering the conversation toward any of these subjects requires a **CHA×5** roll to produce something useful. But after the first success, word reaches Scalzo and he warns the gossiper off.

SECRET PROGRAMS: *Failure:* The co-worker mentions the BLACKSTAR space-plane and the MISTY imaging satellites, but can't really help, because all that information is need-to-know. Even the people who put the stuff up don't really know how it operates, or even, sometimes, what it is. *Success:* The co-worker says to keep their voices down. There are paranoid people working on the various no-publicity space launches. Those under the blanket of code-clearance programs never really get out again. They move away and are reassigned to various, far-flung locales.

SPACE DEFENSE INITIATIVE: *Failure:* The co-worker talks about the infeasibility of weaponized satellites. A fielded three-warhead ICBM is 50 million dollars, while launching an orbital platform to defeat such a rocket costs 5 billion. It would need to be able to strike a hundred times, without missing once, to overcome its cost-equivalent missile wave. *Success:* Shooting down a missile midair had no margin of error and the danger of false-positive deploys is unacceptably high. So the shift was made to intelligence satellites. Satellites are fragile and finicky. If one is knocked down and seized, the enemy can't do much about it. They may suspect, but if they accuse us, they've just told us our weapon worked, and we can accuse them of shoddily building their equipment. The co-worker thinks its a given that a counter-satellite back and forth has been going on for decades, very, very quietly.

WEIRDNESS IN ORBIT: *Failure:* The co-worker discusses "space euphoria," pointing out Ed White's famous "this is the saddest moment of my life" statement when Grissom ordered him back into the capsule from the first American space walk. Space euphoria is the feeling that you've become one with all space and time when you're floating outside the capsule, a feeling of total peace. This feeling hits about one spacewalker in nine. *Success:* Gordon Cooper isn't the only pilot who has seen UFOs. Some were, indeed, spotted from orbit. In the Nineties, the Pentagon had a specific phone number set up for pilots to report unorthodox aircraft sightings.

Physicals

Before launch, Turner performs physical examinations on Weintraub and O'Neil. Their medical files are a sea of redacted information, filled with black marks, omissions, and deletions. Nevertheless, both men showed moderate nausea resistance during simulated zero-gravity test flights on the "vomit comet," a jetliner officially nicknamed the "Weightless Wonder." By flying in challenging up-and-down parabolas like a roller-coaster track, the plane provides 25 seconds of free-fall at the top of the arc, paid for by 40 seconds of almost double gravity. Then it starts again. A typical flight repeats fifty times. O'Neil and Weintraub are marginally less likely than most to become space-sick. But the news gets worse.

O'Neil's Physical

O'Neil is in decent physical shape for a casual smoker in his sixties, but he's the worst physical specimen Deirdre Turner has ever examined for NASA. His blood pressure (155/100) is alarming, his lung capacity is dismal, and there's a real chance—call it 50/50—of the blood vessels in his eyes rupturing under the force of takeoff. The odds of him suffering a fatal heart attack are likely only one in ten, less than the one-in-five odds she estimates of him having a massive embolism.

A **Medicine** roll can reveal other things. *Failure:* She notices old scarring down his left side, all the way to his foot. It looks like a high-voltage surface electrocution scar, as if his skin were wet during a shock. *Success:* She notes that the electrical activity in his brain is more intense than usual and also far more regular. Almost rhythmic.

If asked about the lung damage, O'Neil replies that when he was young he was involved in an accident while working at a Union Carbide plant. No roll reveals whether this is true or just a well-worn lie.

As for the brain activity, he smiles. He says that his work on BLACKSAT and related projects has regulated his neural activity as a side effect of "certain esoteric meditation processes." He seems amused and suggests that Bruce's brain will scan the same "if not more so."

Finally, if asked about "Albert Kannessinger," O'Neil sighs. He confesses it was a name he hoped he had escaped. Alfred Kannessinger is his name. Albert Kannessinger was his twin brother. Albert took advantage of their matching faces and his brother's security clearances and used them for less than honorable reasons.

If Turner makes a **HUMINT** roll to examine that story, a failure indicates that it's a lie. A success indicates that it's a lie and that O'Neil is very tired; he hopes, for her sake, that she does not pursue this further.

Within two hours of first hearing the name "Alfred Kannessinger," one can find a few documents supporting his story on the Internet. They weren't there before. The astronauts may learn more about his background later; see **CONVERSATIONS** on page 18.

Weintraub's Physical

O'Neil's status as the worst specimen Dr. Turner ever examined for NASA is short-lived. Despite being 15 years younger, Bruce Weintraub edges him out. Weintraub's hypertension is marginally less debilitating (blood pressure 145/95), but he is carrying an extra forty pounds, he has the throat scarring typical of chronic gastroesophageal reflux, his asthma is alarming, and his lower spine is in terrible shape. He doesn't have the full house of symptoms from a sedentary lifestyle and poor eating habits, but he has more than enough to disqualify him from a shuttle launch. It would be remiss of Dr. Turner to do anything other than give him a medical decline.

A **Medicine** roll reveals the same weird brain-wave patterns found in O'Neil. If Turner spots them with either man, it becomes clear that both share that trait.

Questioning Weintraub

Weintraub is distracted, eager to befriend but also socially immature, and occasionally petulant. He is far more talkative than O'Neil. He is a little intimidated by the astronauts but he likes Turner.

He volunteers that he has always been a genius with abstractions. As the only child of middle-class indulgence, he had camps and math clubs to help him hone a precocious intellect.

Weintraub is both excited and terrified at the prospect of going into space.

Weintraub has a deep and abiding affection for O'Neil (whom he calls "Al Kannessinger," forgetting that he is supposed to use a pseudonym). They have worked together for years and O'Neil is one of a handful of colleagues who showed Weintraub any kind of friendship.

Weintraub's Secrets

Weintraub is very soft on the idea of "classified data." Turner can question him during her examination or other astronauts can talk to him during meals or when they are resting.

If Turner brings up one of the following topics while in the privacy of the exam room, Weintraub gives an answer on the first topic without a roll. After that, or if anyone questions him elsewhere, it requires a **Persuade** test. Dr. Turner gets a +20% bonus if she works this in as a question about safety. With the first success, he talks about one item, or two with a critical success. With the second success, he talks about two items, or three with a critical success. With the third success, he talks about three items, or all remaining items with a critical success. On a failure, he realizes he has said too much and becomes withdrawn and regretful.

THE BRAINWAVES: If told about the brain waves, Weintraub seems disconcertingly pleased and excited, and spouts a wash of pseudo-mathematical terms. If asked to explain what that means, he keeps babbling mathematically. He implies that thoughts are, in some sense, real even beyond the brain and that they attract energy. But his supposed insights are confusing and cloudy.

WOOLRICH: Weintraub has been associated with the Woolrich for a long time, but doesn't feel like he knows him. As to where they met, he lets drop the term "MUSTANG" before he catches and corrects himself. Instead, he says they met at a secured and classified location, many years before.

PROJECT ADAKITE: Weintraub's life really began when he saw the Courtis equations for the first time. He was a 30-year-old NSA analyst recruited to a top-secret project called ADAKITE at a Wyoming facility code-named MUSTANG FIELDS. Weintraub is well aware that it is illegal to discuss anything to do with ADAKITE, including "Courtis equations" or "Dr. Stephen Courtis," with anyone lacking ADAKITE level clearance. But now that the doctor and the astronauts have BLACKSAT clearance, Weintraub is almost eager to share.

THE WHITE PAPER: A brilliant man named Stephen Courtis understood the math well enough to yield results that contradict the way most of us understand reality. Courtis died decades ago, but he left behind a set of notes known as the White Paper, and Weintraub worked on them with O'Neil for years. They are the foundation for the impossible things BLACKSAT does.

THEORIES: Weintraub is excited by this topic. He begins spouting phrases like "para-dimensionality," "speculative section of tensegrity wave forms,"

>> Weintraub's Technobabble

	D4			
D6	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
1	ablative	Courtis	falsely irrational digit	para-dimension/para-dimensional
2	cascade	delimit	flattening	phase
3	cluster	derive/derivation	indicacity	surdive/surd-like/false surd
4	co-numeracy	dishedral	integrate/integration	sympathetic
5	cohesion	entanglement	matrix	transform/transformation
6	concentration	exo-data	multivariate	uncoil

and "uncoupling physical forces from measuring thought-spaces." He says, "Of course, this will all look needless when we finally get the Courtis problems under control." If the characters ask Weintraub to explain anything in greater detail, assemble technobabble out of a roll on the **WEINTRAUB'S TECHNOBABBLE** table and try to make it vaguely plausible. Ultimately, it makes no more sense to the astronauts than to the players, however advanced their mathematics may be.

Training Weintraub and O'Neil

Hamlet and Belton must give the two civilians a crash course on space suits and extra-vehicular activity (EVA). EVA training occurs in a massive swimming pool. Trainees get into a mockup MMU (Manned Mobility Unit), a heavy, clumsy, semi-rigid technological marvel that fits over a space suit. You get in it, put on the helmet, and move around submerged to approximate the feeling of microgravity.

To accomplish any task while wearing an MMU requires a **DEX×5** roll, because the joints are stiff, the gloves clumsy, and the visibility limited. The training regimen for Weintraub and O'Neil is bare-bones, attempting operations like opening a hatch open and going through it. O'Neil barely manages on his second try. Weintraub fails several times and begins complaining about shortness of breath, the panic rising in his voice.

Any astronaut can help him, either physically or by talking him down from panic. Calming him requires a **CHA×5** test. Helping him out of the pool requires a **Pilot** (**Space Suit**) roll. If both rolls succeed, he's out and grateful, but bright red and shaking. If both rolls fail, he starts screaming and thrashing, and manages to injure himself as the astronauts drag him out. If one roll fails, he's out and trembling after throwing up in the suit.

There are several ways the astronauts can try to get information out of Weintraub and O'Neil. Any attempt at asking hard questions requires a **Persuade** test. The descriptions below give a good sense of what Weintraub and O'Neil know. Weintraub, being under considerable pressure, is especially vulnerable. If O'Neil is there, Weintraub is more likely to hold his tongue on some things, but also more likely to slip up and call him "Al" instead of "Pierce."

Hardline with O'Neil

Any astronaut gets a +20% bonus to **Persuade** if they bully O'Neil by accusing him, Colonel Woolrich, and BLACKSAT of deliberately risking Weintraub's life. An astronaut who takes this approach becomes the first pick, if possible, when O'Neil and Weintraub decide which of them to murder in space. *Success:* O'Neil is cowed, slumping, and looking even smaller and older than usual. He admits that he and Weintraub were "essentially prisoners" at a compound in Wyoming called MUSTANG FIELDS. He says that Woolrich is a fool who doesn't know what he's messing with. Whatever BLACKSAT is, it is dangerous. He suddenly realizes he has said far too much and flatly refuses to explain himself further. *Failure:* O'Neil angrily yells at the astronaut or astronauts to leave Weintraub alone. He scowls, shouts that the astronauts have no idea what reality truly is, and then stalks out. Later, if possible, he means to make one of these astronauts the sacrifice to fix BLACKSAT.

Hardline with Weintraub

It's like kicking a puppy. Weintraub is in torment. A little pressure to put him in the corner could make him reveal too much by lashing out. Or it could break him. *Success:* Weintraub starts bawling, curled up and hyperventilating. Through hitching gasps, he admits his fear is only partially for the space shot. The other fear—the bigger one—is of what's waiting up there for them. Suddenly realizing he has said far too much, he flatly refuses to explain himself further. *Failure:* Weintraub gives the astronaut a flaccid shove and, with snot pouring down his face, yells out an obscene insult and launches into a tirade. He attacks the character of the astronauts, claiming they have no idea about anything. Not only do they not understand the disposition of the universe, they could never comprehend it. The things Weintraub knows—the truths—make every achievement by manned spaceflight as ephemeral as a mote of dust in the wind. Then he insists on trying the exercise again, and this time he gets it right.

Soft Touch with O'Neil

O'Neil is mainly concerned with Weintraub's safety. *Success:* O'Neil finds the questioner sincere. He asks for the astronaut's frank opinion about Weintraub's ability to function in space. He says that if the astronaut says Weintraub shouldn't go, he (O'Neil) will support it. But he warns that he does not have much pull with Woolrich. He intimates that this mission is dangerous, and that someone might die. He doesn't want that someone to be Weintraub. *Failure:* O'Neil gives the astronaut a narrow, suspicious look and goes to help Weintraub recover. Later, if possible, he means to make one of these astronauts the sacrifice to fix BLACKSAT.

Soft Touch with Weintraub

Anyone who tries gentleness with Weintraub gets his pathetic gratitude. *Success:* Weintraub babbles about Woolrich being an honorable man, a reasonable one. Woolrich will be disappointed that the mission can't go on but it should be clear to everyone that it's just not worth it. Weintraub then lashes into incoherent technobabble. *Failure:* Weintraub surrenders to his fate. He decides to make himself the sacrifice and die in order to protect the astronaut who befriends him.

Interstitial Refusals

At this point, several astronauts are likely overflowing with complaints with the mission. Dr. Turner is being asked to take responsibility for Weintraub and O'Neil. Belton and Hamlet may have questions about the mental stability of the "specialists." Paul Scalzo is fully on their side if they raise these issues and says he will go straight to Woolrich. (He is, however, careful to make sure they do not tell him anything for which he is not cleared. General mission failure points are fine. Naming the people failing is a grey area that makes him uncomfortable.)

If astronauts go to Woolrich directly, he listens carefully to their concerns and says he's going to give them his full consideration and "present their concerns." (He carefully avoids saying to whom he will present them.)

About 12 to 24 hours after that, Scalzo's secretary calls to tell the astronauts that the mission is proceeding unaltered. Their complains have been registered, but the importance of the flight takes precedence. The astronauts are expected to continue, overcome, and succeed. Woolrich takes full responsibility.

It's possible that Dr. Turner asks about sedating Weintraub to reduce launch trauma. That's fine. It won't make any difference, but she doesn't know that.

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Launch

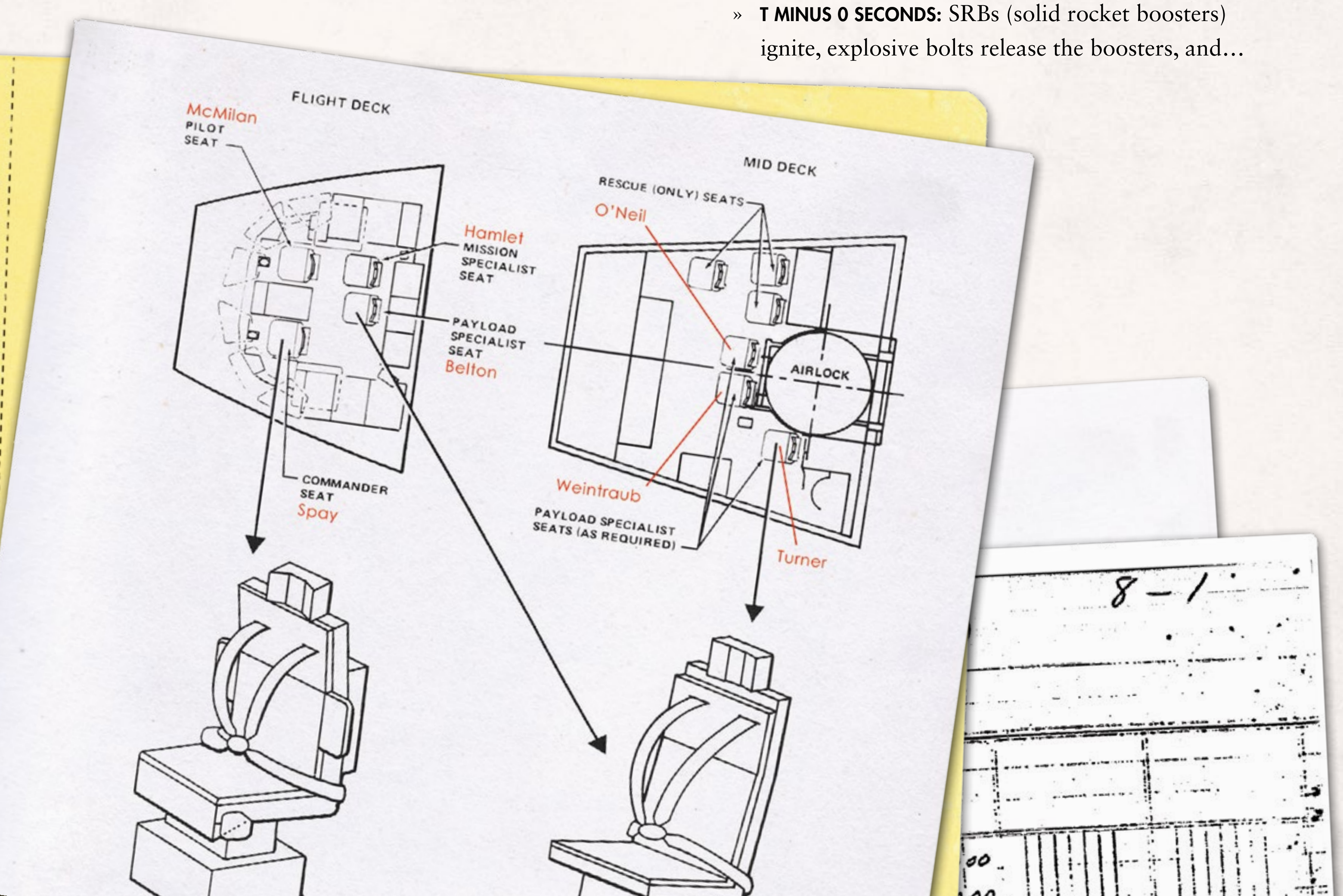
Jump forward to launch day. Spay and McMillan are in the cramped cockpit, with the other five crammed into the mid-deck. Captain Belton is "jump master," seated in the forward left seat. In the unlikely event of a bail-out using the Inflight Crew Escape System, he's the one who blows the hatch and deploys the escape pole. (See **SHUTTLE ABORT MODES** on the pilots' character sheets. Parachuting safely under such circumstances requires special training in parachuting and a **DEX×5** test. Failure inflicts 2D6 damage. A fumble kills the parachutist. O'Neil and Weintraub both fail. That kills Weintraub and cripples O'Neil.)

The crew members are dressed in puffy orange Advanced Crew Escape Suits which, despite the snappy acronym ACES, everyone calls a "pumpkin suit." Weintraub weeps as countdown proceeds, with O'Neil trying to comfort him. (Someone else could succeed by making a **CHA×5** test.) Weintraub and O'Neil are in the rear seats, with Turner between them.

Explain to Spay's and McMillan's players that, despite their titles of "pilot" and "commander," there is not too much to do during the launch. It's automated unless something goes badly wrong. If something goes wrong, the mission commander decides whether to abort or press on, and which abort option to pick. The abort modes are described on the pilot's and commander's character sheets.

Describe the launch vividly, second by second, and build the tension leading up to and after launch time ("T").

- **T MINUS 2 MINUTES:** Crew members close and lock their visors.
- **T MINUS 31 SECONDS:** Ground launch sequencer is go for auto-sequence start.
- **T MINUS 10 SECONDS:** Main engine hydrogen burnoff system activates.
- **T MINUS 6 SECONDS:** Main engine starts. The entire launch stack of shuttle, fuel pod, and boosters pitches down about six feet. This is known as the "nod" or the "twang."
- **T MINUS 0 SECONDS:** SRBs (solid rocket boosters) ignite, explosive bolts release the boosters, and…


FLIGHT DECK
McMilan
PILOT SEAT
Hamlet
MISSION SPECIALIST SEAT
PAYLOAD SPECIALIST SEAT
Belton
COMMANDER SEAT
Spay
MID DECK
RESCUE (ONLY) SEATS
O'Neil
AIRLOCK
Weintraub
PAYLOAD SPECIALIST SEATS (AS REQUIRED)
Turner
8-1

liftoff. The astronauts feel the vibration of the incredible, deafening roar in the bones

» **T+12 SECONDS:** The shuttle starts to pitch and roll, right on schedule. Instead of lying on their backs, facing upwards, the crew is now inclined, knees over head. The craft hits about 1.7 G forces, so someone who normally weighs 70 kg feels like they weigh 120 kg. All astronauts see a grey, speckly fog as G-forces impact their optic nerves. Weintraub starts gasping. He is experiencing terrible pains in his chest and eyes. If Turner wants to get out of her seat at this point, it requires a successful **STR×5** roll. Tell her player that the protocol is to wait until reaching microgravity (T+8 minutes, 30 seconds) before attempting to render aid.

» **T+19 SECONDS:** The roll is complete. Weintraub is screaming. CAPCOM (Woolrich) cuts Weintraub's mic from everyone in the shuttle and tells Turner that Weintraub's heart rate and blood pressure have leaped into danger zones. She must watch them and prepare for treatment when the shuttle reaches orbit. Iron-clad protocol is to wait until microgravity before attempting to render aid. Turner's player may decide whether she unstraps in order to go to Weintraub's aid.

» **T+38 SECONDS:** The shuttle reaches "Max Q," the point of greatest aerodynamic stress on the vehicle. The throttle automatically eases back as the spacecraft breaks the sound barrier. CAPCOM restores Weintraub's mic for Turner only, but cuts her mic from everyone but Weintraub. O'Neil demands to know what's going on. If Turner (or anyone else) tries to rise now, it requires an **Athletics** test. If she got out before, she can attempt to reach Weintraub by making a **DEX×5** test.

» **T+48 SECONDS:** The shuttle is 5.6 km up and moving at 1,200 km per hour. CAPCOM checks in with the pilot and commander, only to discover there are radio problems. It's a brief cut-out, then communication is restored. If Turner or anyone else is rattling around midships, they're still doing whatever they last tried. If she has already gotten to Weintraub, Turner can attempt to perform CPR with a **First Aid** test. If she has not gotten up yet, CAPCOM orders her to give aid to Weintraub, in defiance of protocol.

» **T+57 SECONDS:** The engines start to increase thrust again. Radio gets freaky. Woolrich tries Turner's channel and then Spay's, but all they get are word fragments and static. Turner hears "…medic…Weintrau…let…cop…" while Spay hears "…proceed to…radio…O'Neil…permis…" From this point until weightlessness, all rolls are at –20% except for **Pilot**. If anyone has succeeded at **First Aid** on Weintraub, he is still alive, but he experiences blindness due to burst blood vessels in his retina. If not, he dies. Anyone who realizes he has died loses 0/1 **SAN** from helplessness, except Turner (who expected it).

» **T+1 MINUTE, 47 SECONDS:** Radio is completely down. The shuttle is 35 km up and moving at 4,160 km per hour. If the pilot and commander attempt **Craft** (**Electrician**) tests to restore radio function, they do not succeed. (The problem is on the ground, but there is no way for them to know that.)

» **T+2 MINUTES, 13 SECONDS:** The orbital maneuvering system engines ignite.

» **T+2 MINUTES, 30 SECONDS:** The SRBs separate. Anyone not restrained must make a **CON×5** test or collapse.

» **T+3 MINUTES 54 SECONDS:** CAPCOM gets back on the radio for maybe 10 seconds. If Turner got up to help Weintraub, Woolrich screams at her to get back in her seat.

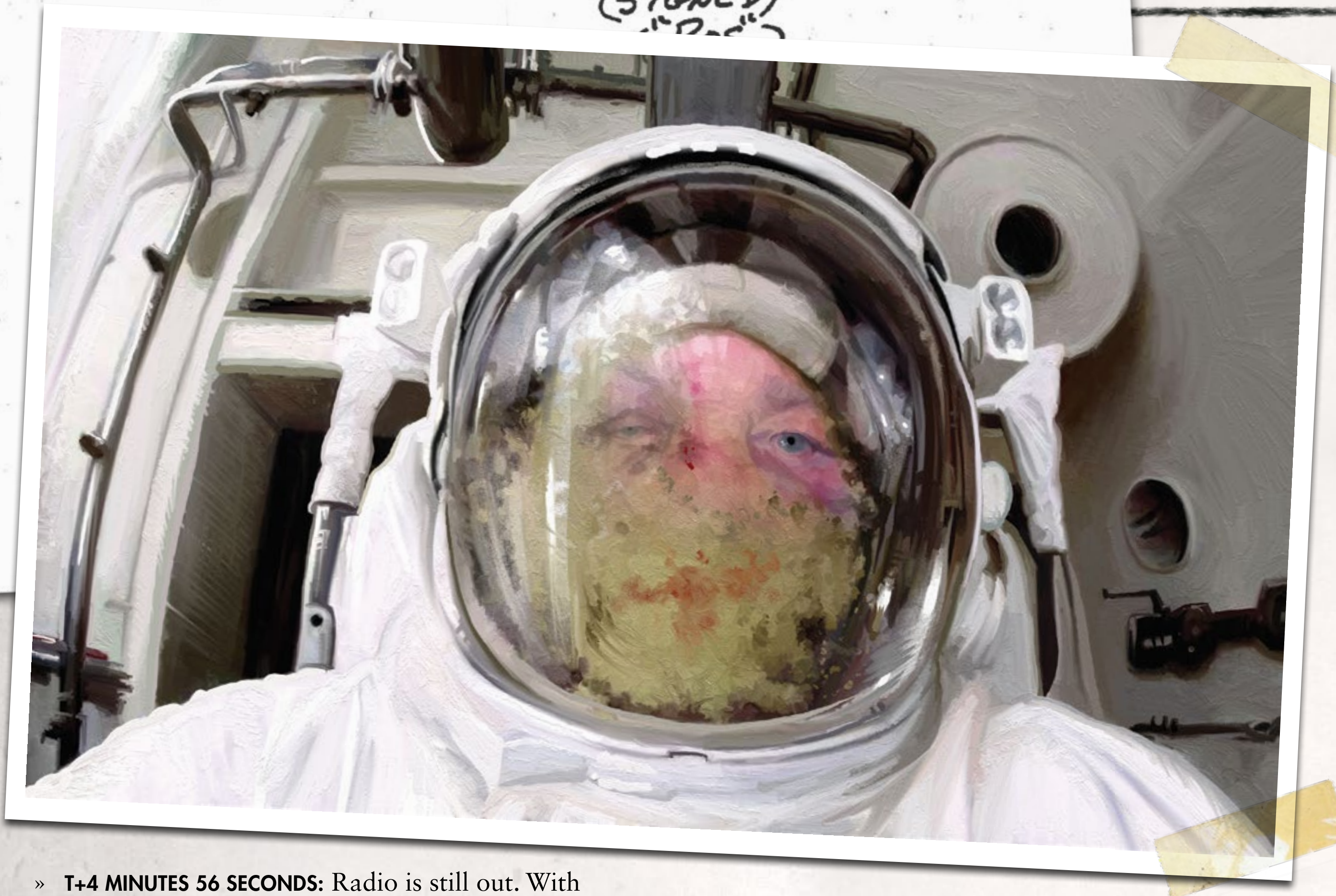
» **T+4 MINUTES:** If Weintraub is not dead, that means someone (probably Turner) has been rendering medical aid. They need to stabilize him before he slips back into cardiac arrest. In the shuttle's oxygen mixture, a defibrillator is out of the question. It could cause an explosion. An anistreplase injection could save him. This requires a **Medicine** test at –20% due to the extraordinary circumstances. If it succeeds, Weintraub survives. He is catatonic and blind, and in any event completely useless and checked out, but alive.

mechanisms of the

to the vital NASA Lunar Programs.

Sincerely,

(SIGNED)



- **T+4 MINUTES 56 SECONDS:** Radio is still out. With a successful **Pilot** test, Spay or McMillan can tell that things seem all right. An Abort to Orbit (ATO) is possible; that would allow the mission to continue but it would be more challenging. If Spay thinks it necessary, his player must attempt a **Pilot** test. If the roll fails, Spay brings it to the adjusted orbit but the effort costs him 2D4 WP.
- **T+5 MINUTES 28 SECONDS:** The shuttle rolls to heads-up position for better radio telemetry. It does no good.
- **T+5 MINUTES 45 SECONDS:** Every conscious character must make a **CON×5** test. Any who fail grey out until they hit microgravity.
- **T+6 MINUTES 40 SECONDS:** ATO is no longer an option. The astronauts are committed to the mission trajectory.
- **T+7 MINUTES:** The G forces continue to build, maxing out at triple Earth gravity. A 70 kg person feels like 210 kg. The radio cuts back in. Woolrich demands to know what's going on. He explains that the problem on the ground has been solved, but he forgets to put Turner's and Weintraub's radios back into the loop as he demands a situation report.
- **T+8 MINUTES 30 SECONDS:** Thrust ceases. Orbit is achieved. The astronauts are in microgravity, orbiting Earth.

Rendezvous With BLACKSAT

Give the players a chance to catch their breath after that pressure, to mimic the pause their characters have. Let them take stock while their characters get out of their seats, remove their pumpkin suits and get something cold to drink. They can yell at Mission Control. Woolrich is all apologies. He accepts any amount of shit they want to throw at them. They can't do anything to him right now and he still needs them, so he plays nice and tells them anything he thinks they want to hear.

If Weintraub is dead, protocol is to put the body in a space suit and store him until return to Earth. Ejecting the body would, legally, constitute littering and could create a hazard to other spaceflights and satellites. If alive, he is completely debilitated for hours, sobbing and unresponsive. He might even start flailing wildly, bouncing off the walls until restrained. (A character may make an **Unarmed Combat** test to restrain him while another ties him up).

Anyone who now learns that Weintraub died during the launch loses 0/1 **SAN** from helplessness. Turner's roll to resist that **SAN** loss is at a –20% penalty.

The mission proceeds. The next step is for the shuttle to rendezvous with BLACKSAT, a process requiring nearly 48 hours of careful piloting.

There are two types of crucial things that can occur during the long two days as the shuttle approaches BLACKSAT. One is technical, where Belton or Hamlet may discover that the space suits have been tampered with. The other is social, since the astronauts have time to interrogate O'Neil and Weintraub.

Checking the Space Suits

Belton and Hamlet are scheduled to go over the shuttle's three space suits, or Manned Mobility Units (MMUs). At this point, they do not know that Woolrich has installed kill switches in each MMU: devices to let him remotely terminate an astronaut so that O'Neil can "unwind their consciousness" and repair BLACKSAT at the right time.

Either Belton or Hamlet gets a **Craft (Electronics)** test, with a +20% bonus if one helps the other. *Failure:* A small, unknown device has been added to each MMU. It is spliced in on the side of the Primary Life Support System (PLSS), the backpack that provides gases that an astronaut needs to live. Taking it off or examining it further will damage the MMU. *Success:* In addition to everything that would have come with a failure, the astronaut can get inside the cover and frame. The new device has wires going from the suit's internal antenna to a small digital receiver, along with some sort of effector output that disappears into the bowels of the oxygen regulation system. Without wrecking the PLSS, there is no way to know more.

The astronauts certainly might ask someone about this, but the answers they get are unlikely to satisfy. Paul Scalzo is not permitted to talk to them. Woolrich tells them it's an enhanced radio rig to allow Mission Control to better monitor their status, which is especially important for O'Neil and Weintraub. With a **HUMINT** test, an astronaut gets the idea that Woolrich is telling a half-truth, at best, and is desperate to keep them from further interfering with the system. On a failure, an astronaut feels Woolrich is being less than honest. As for O'Neil, the results of confronting him with the kill-switch are covered on page 18.

Being smart and capable go-to guys, Belton and Hamlet may try to disable the kill switches. There are a few ways to do this.

DISABLE THE RADIOS: The kill switches activate when a radio signal triggers them. Both Hamlet and Belton have enough know-how to keep their radios from receiving. No roll is required. On the other hand, that leaves them in the icy depths of space with no way to talk to anyone or hear what anyone else says unless they press their helmets together so the vibrations of sound carry through. Every minute of their training emphasizes that this is a bad idea.

DISCONNECT IT FROM THE OXYGEN FEED: This requires a **Craft (Electronics)** test. A separate roll has to be made for each suit. On a failure, the switch is still connected. On a fumble, the breathing system is damaged and clearly will not function.

DISCONNECT IT FROM THE RADIO: This requires **Craft (Electronics)** test at –20%. Each suit requires a separate roll. On a failure, the switch still works just fine. On a fumble, the radio is damaged; receiving or broadcasting a signal requires a **Luck** roll. That includes receiving the signal to activate the still-functional kill switch.

TAKE THE MMU APART: This renders the MMU useless for the duration of the mission. A successful **Craft (Electronics)** test traces the wiring of the switch to a tiny ampule of some unknown gas connected to the oxygen feed. Turner does not have the tools to determine the nature of the gas. Releasing it into the atmosphere of the shuttle reveals it to be a poisonous nerve gas. It has a Lethality rating of 10%, with Speed of 2D6 turns, in the immediate vicinity; it inflicts 2D6 damage, with a Speed of 2D6 minutes, everywhere else.

Conversations

While one of them works on the MMUs, any astronaut can search for information through conversation.

Colonel Woolrich

If Weintraub is dead, Woolrich calls him a hero who "died for what he believed in: America." If Weintraub lives and the astronauts want to return to Earth early to save him, Woolrich invokes the absolute necessity of the mission. Nothing can prevent it from being completed.

Paul Scalzo

He is off the mic. No BLACKSAT clearance.

Weintraub

If Weintraub is alive, he asks to be released from his restraints. If released, he suddenly attempts to get to the escape hatch and blow it free. It's locked, of course. He might try to hit or harm someone, but it's hopeless. He rebounds off in microgravity. An **Unarmed Combat** test is sufficient to restrain him again.

If spoken with, but not released, he babbles about the "instantiated potentialities" and "actualized virtual consciousnesses" waiting for them.

An astronaut who tries to calm Weintraub with friendly concern succeeds only with a **Psychotherapy** test. If it fails, he calms down and earnestly entreats the person who spoke to stay in the shuttle until it's back on Earth, no matter what happens. If it succeeds, he asks to speak to O'Neil. If that is permitted, Weintraub launches into a diatribe about the mission, imploring "Al" to "Let these people live. Kill me, not them." After that, he refuses to speak further.

Asking Woolrich about Weintraub's ravings gets only deflections and a certainty that Weintraub is delirious.

O'Neil

O'Neil, on the other hand, may open up to the astronauts over the two days it takes to reach BLACKSAT. If Turner took heroic effort to save Weintraub, that makes O'Neil willing to talk. Otherwise, each line of questioning requires a **Persuade** test. If the **Persuade** attempt fails, O'Neil becomes surly and withdrawn, tapping inscrutable mathematics into a laptop and answering any questions with terse evasions. If the attempt succeeds, O'Neil becomes reflective and opens up. If the astronauts shut off the microphones, he gives the following answers if the astronauts ask about these topics.

KILL WHO NOW? Most likely, O'Neil says Weintraub is delirious. The harm Weintraub suffered in liftoff was catastrophic. It could easily have induced a stroke. O'Neil admits the truth only if previous events convinced him to not follow through with the plan to sacrifice one of the astronauts. In that case, he says that there is a chance that his work on BLACKSAT will require power that can only be supplied by unspooling the patterns of a human consciousness. The devices are "kill switches." A kill switch will euthanize one of the spacewalkers, unspooling his consciousness in a release of hypergeometric energy to fuel an occult ritual performed by O'Neil to neutralize the weird, unnatural artifact at the heart of BLACKSAT. That is their true mission: not to repair BLACKSAT but to deactivate it, so the artifact that powers it is inert and harmless when its orbit decays and it returns to Earth. O'Neil can show them the kill switches and say that it is too much to ask. He is willing to let the damn satellite stay dead.

UNSPOOLING CONSCIOUSNESS: O'Neil believes his work on the unspooling of human consciousness as a way to fuel hypergeometric transactions explained why there was so much human sacrifice in old-time magic. A human body is a machine that "plays" consciousness like a phonograph "plays" a record player. Even if the record player is shut off, the grooves in the record remain. Even when the body shuts down, the consciousness remains. If that data—the mind—can be unspooled, tremendous energy is produced.

O'NEIL'S BACKGROUND: Pierce O'Neil (formerly Alfred Kannessinger) is an occultist of modest, but genuine, power. Throughout the course of his long life, O'Neil has found that every seven years he undergoes a period of spectacular extrasensory visions. His parents "had some non-traditional beliefs" and studied ancient mathematical practices buried in folklore.

When a government research project started experimenting with what they called "hypergeometry," O'Neil sensed it. He made contact with the researchers and was inducted into Projecct REDLIGHT, where academics tried to penetrate mathematics they had uncovered from exotic sources. They found O'Neil's insights useful, not least because he had suggestions for safety measures.

O'Neil says, bluntly, that hypergeometry is "observer dependent" in a way that Heisenberg never imagined. Consciousness is mathematics. A witch named Keziah Mason studied the manipulation of consciousness and physics through hypergeometry in the late 1600s. She called such works "spells." Hypergeometry has been encoded in folklore for centuries. O'Neil's claims clashed violently with his administrators' military and scientific world-views. The higher pay grades regarded him as a disposable asset.

ADAKITE: O'Neil eventually made his way to a Wyoming REDLIGHT skunkworks called MUSTANG FIELDS, home of Project ADAKITE. He labored there for years, integrating his math with theirs. His contributions were examined grudgingly by a security apparatus half-convinced he was a plant from a hostile foreign power. He was not trusted to leave it unescorted.

O'Neil was attached to BLACKSAT, a subproject of ADAKITE, only after the satellite stopped responding in 2008. An increasingly desperate Colonel Woolrich hoped that O'Neil's "remote viewing" could scan the device.

BLACKSAT is an orbiting object with hypergeometric gravity actuators that can alter specific gravitational interactions in order to damage other nations' spy satellites. Its range is about 37,000 km, and with a "gravitic whorl," it can make an object about 1.5 kg heavier for up to 15 minutes. Then it loses power for eight hours before it can be used again. A "gravitic crest" can, similarly, reduce an object's effective mass within similar parameters.

O'Neil and Weintraub believe there is no concern that BLACKSAT can damage the shuttle. A gravitic whorl or crest doesn't exert actual pressure. It creates enough virtual increase to send a satellite into a spin, but a powered craft can easily compensate.

WORLDVIEW: O'Neil knows he is a very small fish in an appallingly vast ocean. That most people are ignorant of this fact cheers him not at all. He is convinced that his consciousness will persist after bodily death to feed or entertain immaterial intelligences of vast, malignant indifference. He hopes that most human identities fade after death, lacking the mathematical superstructure that accumulated around his mind. If so, all the better for them.

Changing the Plan

The astronauts may have heard enough already to persuade them to abandon the mission. Encourage the players to think through their options from their characters' perspectives and priorities. However outlandish the truth of the mission may be, it is recorded as a classified satellite maintenance mission. Woolrich and the people backing him will certainly record defiance of orders and failure to perform the mission in such a way as to cover their own tracks and destroy the astronauts' careers.

For all the debate and argument that may be involved, the option is not in the astronauts' hands. The shuttle was prepared long before liftoff. If Woolrich's skeleton crew on the ground detects a change, they flip a switch to remotely disable on-board control. The shuttle is dead in orbit until the astronauts satisfy Woolrich that they are prepared to follow orders.

Disabling the equipment that gives Woolrich control means digging deep into the shuttle's electronics. It calls for a **Craft (Electronics)** roll and a **Pilot (Spacecraft)** roll. If either fails, the attempt fails; they can disable ground control only by destroying their capacity to communicate with ground control. That incurs a penalty of –20% on all subsequent **Pilot (Spacecraft)** tests. If both tests fail, or either fumbles, telemetry damage prevents all further communication with ground control.

Spacewalk

Three astronauts are scheduled to perform a spacewalk simultaneously in the BLACKSAT mission. That is unusual but it was done once before, in 1992. It takes a well-coordinated procedure to suit three of them up one at a time and squeeze them into the airlock with no room to spare. The BLACKSAT schedule is for Turner to help Belton, Hamlet, and Weintraub suit up, with O'Neil to replace Weintraub if necessary. Belton and Hamlet are the mission specialists assigned to MMU duty.

In the Airlock

Before the spacewalk, it is necessary to "camp out" in a pure oxygen atmosphere—in the suits, connected to the shuttle systems in the airlock that connects the mid-deck to the cargo bay, usually while catching some sleep—for four hours to purge nitrogen from the astronauts' systems. Otherwise, they risk decompression sickness. This is called "pre-breathe." This is how Hamlet, Belton, Turner, and O'Neil spend the hours while the shuttle maneuvers into position. Over the last hour or so, pressure in the airlock is reduced to test the suits' integrity. When that is confirmed, pressure in the airlock is reduced to vacuum and the outer hatch is opened to the cargo bay and space. See **STEPPING OUT** on page 20 for what comes next.

Facing the enormity of what is to come, O'Neil might tell all he knows even if previous attempts to question him did not succeed. If there is any information that the astronauts did not yet get from O'Neil (and Weintraub, if alive), the long mid-deck wait is a good time to try to get them to open up. Pick your favorite bits to reveal now.

On the Flight Deck

Once the MMU crew are sealed into the airlock and waiting, Turner takes her station on the aft flight deck, behind the pilot and commander, to watch their vitals. She has a window out to BLACKSAT and a monitor to watch it by camera.

Spay must make a **Pilot** (**Spacecraft**) roll for touchy, hesitant speed matching without burning too much fuel. If the shuttle aborted to orbit, the roll is at –20%. If he succeeds, the shuttle gets close to BLACKSAT. If he fails, he matches speed farther out.

The shuttle is finally within camera range of BLACKSAT. It is an unassuming device, octagonal with solar panels flared out from each of its eight edges. A framework of struts projects from its Earth-facing side, apparently able to angle a flat plate so that it directly aims anywhere within a roughly ninety-degree cone. O'Neil refers to this as the "actuator plane."

Stepping Out

The hyper-oxygenated Belton, Hamlet, and O'Neil—Weintraub is too debilitated even if he still lives—are preparing to disembark. They climb up out of the airlock, tether on to the shuttle, climb down to the payload bay to put on their bulky MMU rigs, and then maneuver out to the satellite. The suits are all in flawless trim, although knowing about the kill switches (see page 17) may dampen their enthusiasm.

The three MMU crew members exit without problems. The airlock opens to the payload bay. The payload bay doors above are open to space.

Next, Hamlet and Belton each must make a **Pilot** (**Space Suit**) roll and one of them—they can choose which—must roll to guide O'Neil. If any fails, their tether connection looks fine but will turn out to be incorrect. If two or more fail, the tethers are snarled and every further **Pilot** (**Space Suit**) roll is at –20%. If Spay aborted to low orbit or failed the **Pilot** (**Spacecraft**) roll to match speed near the satellite, spacewalkers take a –20% penalty on their **Pilot** (**Space Suit**) rolls.

O'Neil is clearly nervous and starts muttering about how he feels something, senses a presence. Woolrich, with excessive calm, tells him to get to the satellite and execute the mission.

Hamlet and Belton must roll **Pilot** (**Space Suit**) to get O'Neil near BLACKSAT. If both succeed, everyone gets there safely. If only one of them succeeds, that astronaut gets O'Neil there. If either fails *and* previously failed to get a good tether connect, that astronaut disconnects and begins drifting—a very dangerous position. If both fail but have good connections, they're all drifting around in space, too far from the satellite to do anything, when the next event occurs.

A Derivative

While Spay and McMillan tensely listen to Hamlet and Belton maneuvering O'Neil on the tether, something moves across their viewports. A collection of angles that distorts the stars. It does not conform to any ideas of movement through three dimensions that they comprehend.

The distortion perches on the nosecone of the shuttle, meters away from them, separated only by the shuttle's frame and windshield. There is plenty of time for Turner to hear about it and see it, too.

If O'Neil and Weintraub (if he still lives) hear about this, they are fascinated and horrified. *"It's a Derivative! My God, we were right!"* They tell the astronauts, much too late, not to look at it, as their attention can resolve it more firmly into three dimensions.

Seeing a Derivative for the first time reveals alien truths about the shape of space, in the same way that seeing an apple fall wordlessly instructs you about gravity. There is an eerie, nonphysical, but distinct, purposefulness to its movement. The sight costs 0/1D4 **SAN** from the unnatural. If the **SAN** test fails, that adds +1 to the witness' **Unnatural** skill.

If the astronauts ask CAPCOM to confirm or explain it, Woolrich says: "It's a distortion in the window. Quit trying to spook yourself. Focus on the mission."

The distortion maneuvers *into* the nosecone and out of sight. It warps and distorts its way through the metal and the space that metal occupies. This might be a good time to remind them that if the nose-cone heat shields are damaged, the shuttle could disintegrate when it returns to the atmosphere. Not that there's anything they can do about it.

The astronauts and Turner can watch for its movements on cameras. It emerges in the cramped mid-deck, below the flight deck, coming through Turner's personal locker. The handwritten label on the locker, "TURNER," distorts to a meaningless gray smear behind it.

Looking at the Derivative on camera is far less disturbing. It looks like a perspective glitch.

Answers from O'Neil or Weintraub

O'Neil or Weintraub can breathlessly explain the theory behind Derivatives, now confirmed by physical proximity.

COILED ENERGY: Stephen Courtis' White Paper, studied for decades by Weintraub, implied that consciousness is coiled energy with shapes defined by thought. It says that spontaneous consciousnesses could be drawn out of the space-shapes formed by Courtis equations like those found on the BLACKSAT. Too much contemplation of them might allow them to cohere into tangible space.

SPACETIME DISTORTIONS: Weintraub named these hypothetical manifestations "Derivatives." He theorized that they were "matrix-dimensional cognitive folds," or temporary intelligences that arise as reflections of the consciousness doing the math and organizing spacetime into self-sustaining patterns. Derivatives are not "alive" in the traditional sense. They do not even have mass, being imposed on the fabric of space itself. But they are persistent, self-willed, and capable of influencing matter. As spacetime distortions, Derivatives are perfectly capable of surviving in the void of space and moving through it.

DERIVATIVES IN HISTORY: Weintraub's theorized Derivatives always made O'Neil think of the "tulpas" said to haunt Tibetan wise men. Some rituals and spells that the ancients practiced to call up "spirits" and "demons" may actually have been hypergeometric formulae that created Derivatives. Perhaps those spells forced the Derivatives into obedient forms by their nature, or perhaps the Derivatives were simply deluded (like their makers) into believing they were ghosts and devils compelled into service.

Integrity Breach (Moral)

Meanwhile, the MMU astronauts are supposed to get O'Neil near BLACKSAT.

If either Belton or Hamlet failed both **Pilot** (**Space Suit**) rolls, he now realizes he is not getting oxygen through the tether. This is not urgent. Even without a tether, the oxygen in the backpack is sufficient for hours. But it costs 0/1D4 **SAN** from helplessness to realize that after all that training, something so basic was screwed up. Resetting the tether does not require a roll.

If both MMU experts failed their rolls to rig up O'Neil, he starts to drift. They have three tries (each) to amass a total of two successful **Pilot** (**Space Suit**) rolls to capture him.

Most likely, at least one astronaut escorts O'Neil to the satellite. If the kill switches in the suits have not been disabled, O'Neil has to decide which of them (if anyone) to murder in his ritual to shut down BLACKSAT. This is the Handler's call. Have the astronauts befriended O'Neil or made him feel valued as a colleague? Or have they alienated him?

If O'Neil likes the astronauts, he talks about not wanting to do it, or not wanting to pick between Belton and Hamlet. Woolrich tells him: "Complete the mission!" O'Neil still hesitates. Woolrich says: "I'll do it from here in three…two…one," at which point he triggers the switch in Hamlet's suit. The others can hear Hamlet begin to wheeze and gag before Woolrich cuts off Hamlet's radio.

The switch releases a puff of nerve gas. In the suit, it has a Lethality rating of 20% and a Speed of 1D6 turns. There is absolutely nothing that Turner can do except watch the victim's vitals go haywire and probably flatline. Realizing that the victim is dead costs the others 1/1D6 **SAN** from helplessness. If the victim survives, the victim loses 1/1D10 **SAN** from helplessness and Woolrich or O'Neil triggers the next astronaut.

O'Neil begins gesticulating within his bulky space suit and chanting what sounds like a prayer in some unknown language with too many consonants.

Does O'Neil successfully disable the unnatural artifact inside BLACKSAT, with or without a sacrifice? Or what if the astronauts disabled the nerve-gas traps in the MMUs? The results are up to you.

Derivatives Up Close

Derivatives are curious, alien, and hungry for patterns of meaning that can extend their distortion of space before gravity smooths them back out. The information in written text can give them some "nourishment," which reduces the text to a curious uniform greyness. Fortunately for the computer on the shuttle, electricity and magnetic impulses are impenetrable to their digestion.

They can, however, feed on the patterns of a human mind until the synaptic passages are reduced to a uniform dullness. After that, they disorder the body's evolved pattern, causing cells to rupture and decay while bones dissolve and organs fail. The last meal is the DNA code within the cells, unraveled into component nucleotides.

If they get dragged down the gravity well to Earth, their patterns get fatally "smoothed" within minutes, but, of course, there's no way for the astronauts to know that. Even the Derivatives themselves are unaware that the blue object in the distance is deadly.

Being touched by a Derivative is very bad for living things. Each touch does 1D10 damage as the curious Derivative attempts to examine the matter-form of cellular tissue by rotating through its para-dimensional matrix. The target must make a **POW×5** roll. If that succeeds, the target's identity is strong enough to repel the newborn intelligence's fumbling attempts to feed. Every time the **POW×5** roll fails, the human's mind has been partially digested. He or she loses a point of INT, permanently, and loses 1D4/1D10 **SAN** from the unnatural. If INT hits zero, the target dies.

Any magical attack destroys a Derivative immediately, even if it inflicts only one hit point of damage. No non-magical source of damage can harm a Derivative at all.

Integrity Breach (Physical)

An astronaut who climbs from the flight deck down the ladder to the mid-deck to investigate the Derivative has a few options. None are good.

COMMUNICATION: If an astronaut approaches the Derivative, it seems to be “reaching” towards them. It does not respond to speech. The astronaut can touch it. This yields the results described on page 22.

HIDING: The mid-deck is a tiny space. The only place to hide on the mid-deck—the only place with any privacy—is the waste management compartment, a tiny closet with a complex toilet. An astronaut can hide there without a roll. If no other astronaut is visible, the Derivative finds and melds with Weintraub, living or dead. Weintraub starts dissolving into a slurry of blood and tissue. Seeing that in person costs 0/1D4 **SAN** for violence, or 0/1 if seen through a camera. If Weintraub was dead and they put him in a space suit to get him out of the way, this vile soup is contained. If he was alive but restrained, the gunk of floats into the atmosphere.

AIRLOCK: If an astronaut flees into the airlock, the spacewalkers are trapped outside or in the cargo bay until the astronaut goes back to the mid-deck and starts the opening cycle. There is no time to don a space suit. If a spacewalker has already come into the airlock from the payload bay, the mid-deck hatch cannot be opened.

The airlock can hold up to three astronauts in space suits or half a dozen unsuited, jammed as tight as can be.

Subdivisions

Whatever the astronaut in the mid-deck does, they can see the Derivative dividing. There are now two of them.

Out at BLACKSAT, a Derivative emerges from the mathematical notation on the satellite’s actuator plane before the appalled eyes of any witnesses present. For some reason, its distortion has no effect on the actuator plane’s engravings.

Orders

Anyone in the cockpit can see on camera what is happening in the mid-deck below. So can ground control. Give them a chance to go back and forth with CAPCOM about what is happening and what they should do.

Woolrich orders Spay and McMillan to immediately execute an emergency disengagement on the tether and close the doors. Then commence the burn back from orbit. Ground control begins calculations for the vector. In other words, he is ordering them to abandon O’Neil, Hamlet and Belton.

If Spay agrees but McMillan does not, McMillan has the option of rolling **DEX×5** to try to keep Spay from disengaging the umbilicus. If he succeeds, they’re fighting over the controls. If Turner or another astronaut is present, they can help one or the other with a +20% bonus.

If they do not have communication with CAPCOM, the decisions are entirely up to the commander and pilot.

DISENGAGE: If Spay disconnects the tether, Hamlet and Belton can each attempt a **Pilot** (**Space Suit**) roll to get back to the cargo bay before the cargo bay doors close. O’Neil is still thrashing and chanting at the end of the tether near BLACKSAT, determined to finish his mission whatever the cost. If either astronaut tries to save him when they realize the doors are closing, it’s a death sentence. Anyone who tries to save O’Neil, or who fails the **Pilot** (**Space Suit**) roll, cannot get back in time. Even if an astronaut gets back in time, securing an MMU in the payload bay before climbing into to the airlock hatch feels risky. It would be far quicker to abandon the MMU in space. (The exact repercussions either way are up to you.)

The Derivative near the satellite might attack O’Neil or an astronaut. That’s up to you. If everyone is already sufficiently freaked out, it goes after O’Neil. If either Hamlet or Belton is not panicking yet, it moves in on one of them while O’Neil fruitlessly screams at them to not make it more real.

DOING WHAT’S RIGHT: If Commander Spay refuses to leave the astronauts to die, each gets two **Pilot** (**Space Suit**) rolls to try to get aboard. After the first roll, the satellite Derivative attacks whichever of them rolls worst. They hear O’Neil on the radio chanting something that has no visible effect. After the astronauts get their two attempts, ground control attempts to disengage the tether by remote control. Either Spay or McMillan can prevent this with a successful **Pilot (Spacecraft)** roll.

The Airlock

There are now two Derivatives on the mid-deck. They attack anyone who is visible. If no victims are visible, the derivatives either head up to the flight deck or they move out to the airlock, whether or not it is occupied.

An astronaut in the airlock when the spacewalkers try to cycle the airlock open can make a **Craft (Electronics)** roll to override their attempt from inside. Make clear that this means dooming those outside to death. But allowing it to open means the one inside will be flushed out into space. That is lethal without a space suit.

Flying Home

Once the airlock and cargo bay are closed, either Spay or McMillan can attempt a **Pilot (Spacecraft)** roll at –20% to fire up the maneuvering rockets. What happens next depends on their success or failure.

Successful Piloting

If it succeeds, they begin heading back to Earth at a stable rate. CAPCOM asks what the hell is happening. If the hatch between cockpit and mid-deck is open, one Derivative is killing anyone in the mid-deck or airlock while another comes upstairs.

Try to give every character a chance to get touched by one of the Derivatives. You can evoke some despair from those left behind by making it clear that they have been abandoned or cut off. Anyone listening to communications hears as their comrades fry, smother, or get consumed.

Failed Piloting

If the **Pilot (Spacecraft)** roll fails, the shuttle is burning too hard. Everyone on the spacecraft must roll **CON×5** to remain conscious. (Beginning their return to Earth early changes their plotted orbit, but they'll have time to calculate a re-entry after getting away from BLACKSAT.)

If both pilots pass out, McMillan and Spay must make **POW×5** rolls. The higher success (or lowest failure) regains consciousness at the last possible moment and is able to pull the shuttle out of its plunge. The other guy in the cockpit is a partially melted corpse, the sight of which costs 1/1D6 **SAN** from violence. If the pilot retains self-control, he makes an emergency landing and saves the shuttle. He loses 1/1D4 **SAN** from helplessness as he realizes his career is over.

Re-Entry

How long does it take for the shuttle to get low enough that the gravity destroys the Derivatives? That's up to you. The astronauts don't know why the Derivatives finally go away. If they were trying some desperate ploy to be rid of them, maybe the survivor(s) think that worked. But it was Earth's gravity.

Aftermath

The public face of the launch was a stony "The mission is secret and you are not allowed to know anything about it." The story of the return is that a major malfunction in the atmospheric components caused an internal fire, which explains any physical injuries to the personnel or even the destruction of the craft.

Surviving flight personnel find their careers wrecked. The pilots, some of the best in the world, are grounded after hearings that pin as much blame on them as on Scalzo and Woolrich, who organized this fiasco. Some of the survivors may privately welcome this fate. Any disorders picked up during BLACKSAT are likely to focus on space and perhaps even flight itself.

Paul Scalzo is disgraced and serves as the scapegoat for the mission's failure. He retires from NASA and gets a desk job at Boeing. If other survivors contact him, he tells them to get lost and not ask questions. "They gave me this job, and they threatened my kids," he says tersely. "I'm doing the job and trying to forget everything that happened. So should you. Sorry." He refuses to define that "they."

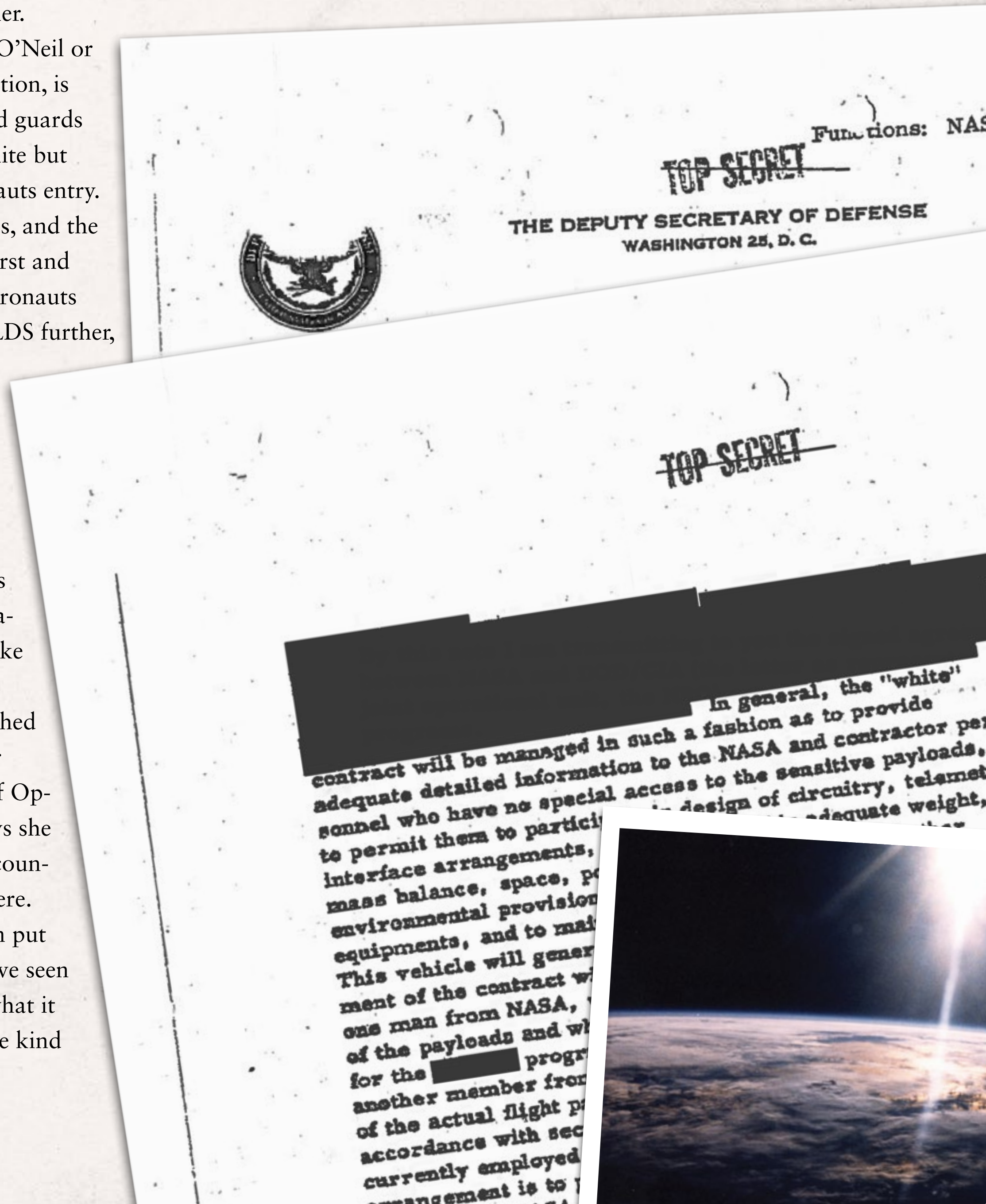
Colonel Andrew Woolrich is relieved of command due to "health reasons." He puts off astronauts who try to talk to him. Those who barge in find him defensive and bitter. He deeply resents “those bastards at MUSTANG FIELDS who sold me out—me and Weintraub and your buddies, too.” He asks for a few days to get some “interesting materials” together. He tells the survivors to keep the details of the flight to themselves. The world is not ready for the truth of what’s up there. The night after they visit him, he dies in a single car accident on the highway near his house. Nobody at the Program mourns much. Woolrich was a holdover from the MAJESTIC days. He wanted to prove the value of expanding the Program’s remit, and pulled every string he could find to orchestrate this catastrophic operation. Whether and how the players learn that is up to the Handler.

MUSTANG FIELDS, if O’Neil or Weintraub explained its location, is still there. The heavily-armed guards at the gate are extremely polite but firm as they deny the astronauts entry. They have orders, willingness, and the legal right to kill intruders first and ask questions later. If the astronauts investigate MUSTANG FIELDS further, they soon come in contact with a Delta Green case officer who asks them to leave it alone.

The Program is watching the survivors in any event. After a year or two, as they have settled into new careers, if they do not try to take their unnatural experiences public, they may be approached individually by a case officer from the Program’s Office of Operations. The case officer says she has an idea of what they encountered and experienced up there. They should never have been put in that position. But they have seen the unnatural. They know what it can do. They can imagine the kind of threat that it poses. And what they saw was just a glimpse. There is a world of horror out there. The survivors can help save others from it. It will mean ugly work and ugly choices. It will mean working in secrecy and without much help. But it will mean saving lives and maybe humanity itself. Do they want in?

Pregenerated Astronauts

These characters’ stats are higher than most Agents. That’s fine. They are best-of-the-best types. If a survivor returns as a Delta Green agent after BLACKSAT, their high scores can make up for having a **Pilot** skill that’s obsolete after 2011.



Functions: NAS

~~TOP SECRET~~

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

~~TOP SECRET~~

[redacted] In general, the "white"
contract will be managed in such a fashion as to provide
adequate detailed information to the NASA and contractor pe
sonnel who have no special access to the sensitive payloads,
to permit them to partici
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mass balance, space, p
environmental provision
equipments, and to mai
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Player Information Handouts

BLACKSAT Clearance

18 U.S. Code §798 governs the disclosure of classified material—fines and up to ten years in jail—and BLACKSAT is a special-access program so containment is especially tight. BLACKSAT clearance is restricted to the crew roster and Colonel Andrew Woolrich.

It is illegal for you to:

- say or write the word "BLACKSAT" to anyone who is not known to have the clearance;
- confirm or deny the existence of a satellite of that name;
- confirm or deny the existence of a security clearance of that name; or
- discuss matters pertaining to counter-satellite technologies with anyone lacking BLACKSAT clearance, even on a hypothetical, conversational, satirical, political, moral, or ethical level.

Shuttle Abort Modes

If something goes wrong during launch, the mission commander decides whether to abort or press on, and which abort option to pick. Aborting a shuttle launch is unthinkable unless it is the only way to prevent catastrophe. An abort almost certainly means the commander will never go to space again. A few other abort options are available immediately after liftoff.

Abort to Orbit (ATO)

Window of use: T+5 minutes to T+7 minutes 20 seconds. ATO means that the shuttle cannot reach its desired orbit, but still has enough fuel to reach a lower orbit and continue the mission.

Inflight Crew Escape System (ICES)

This abort does not save the spacecraft. It is a pole from which the astronauts parachute down to safety. To use the ICES, the pilot or commander has to put the shuttle on a flat and stable trajectory (on autopilot), descend to 8,000 meters, blow a hatch, and then deploy. Each crew member takes about 12 seconds to get out. Belton is jumpmaster, responsible for guiding the rest out.

PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK Lieutenant Colonel Michael Spay		PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER USAF Pilot; Shuttle Mission Commander
SEX ☐ F ☒ M ☐ ________	AGE 50	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION Caucasian, well tanned, healthy and handsome, with gray, crew-cut hair

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

To be an astronaut is to do anything to go into space. Anything. Only elite pilots, engineers and scientists make it into the program. Only the toughest of them complete the training. Only a fraction of trained astronauts actually go into space. It is humankind's highest ambition and greatest achievement. You have flown one space mission already and there is no human being you would not betray in order to fly again. You don't admit that to anyone.

For the last 18 months, you have been training for a classified, unpublicized rendezvous mission. It's called BLACKSAT, but you know little beyond the name. The language on the security documents was pretty severe. There are some peculiar features. The emphasis on EVA (extravehicular activity) makes sense, but it also seems that you might be bringing non-astronaut personnel along. Who could you be taking into space who is not an astronaut, but who still is entrusted with a secret mission?

However it evolves, everything rests on your shoulders. The fate of this mission can impact the fate of NASA as a whole, and as far as you are concerned, NASA is the apex of human achievement. You will not screw up.

GEAR AND NOTES

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

McMILLAN (PILOT): You flew an ISS resupply mission with McMillan before, and though you never served together in the USAF, you were at the same duty stations during different times, so there's something of a shared history. He's a rock. It pains you to admit this, but he may even be a better pilot than you. A great guy. You'd use McMillan's dirty toothbrush.

TURNER (FLIGHT SURGEON): You could hold Turner to a lower standard because she's a civilian, but you don't have to. She is uncomplaining, smart, and fit for duty. You just don't understand why they don't have an Air Force doctor for this mission.

BELTON (MISSION SPECIALIST): There are not many African American pilots, so Belton deserves credit for joining the club and sticking with it. But it's not easy to like a guy who has such a big chip on his shoulder about being a Navy flier. It seems reasonable that if you want to be the best, you go to the service that has "air" right in the name, but Belton won't hear it.

HAMLET (MISSION SPECIALIST): Dan Hamlet screwed your wife, before the divorce. You're pretty sure he doesn't know you know. It can't affect your responsibility to him. There is no way in hell you're letting Janice think you left her loverboy to die in the vacuum because you're still hung up on her. Besides, losing a man is always a black mark on the commander, no matter the circumstances.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED
Parachuting	DEX
SCUBA	Swim

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	40%	1D4−1		

ARMOR

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	10	50%	Hit Points (HP)	12	
Constitution (CON)	14	70%	Willpower Points (WP)	16	
Dexterity (DEX)	14	70%	Sanity Points (SAN)	80	
Intelligence (INT)	14	70%	Breaking Point (BP)		64
Power (POW)	16	80%			
Charisma (CHA)	11	55%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
NASA	11

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Patriotism
Going Back Into Space
Remaining an Elite Performer
(Defined by the Player)
(Defined by the Player)

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	10%	Ride	10%
Alertness	60%	Forensics	0%	Science: Meteorology	40%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	10%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	50%	Search	20%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	60%	Medicine	0%	Survival	50%
Bureaucracy	40%	Melee Weapons	30%	Swim	50%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science: Air	50%	Unarmed Combat	40%
Craft: Electrician	40%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	60%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Craft (Mechanic)	40%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	20%	Pilot (Spacecraft)	50%
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%	Pilot (Space Suit)	40%
Dodge	30%	Pilot: Airplane	70%	Science (Physics)	40%
Drive	20%				
Firearms	40%	Psychotherapy	10%		

PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER
Major Dirk McMillan	USAF Pilot; Shuttle Pilot

SEX	AGE	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION
☐ F ☒ M ☐ ________	47	Caucasian, short but trim and athletic, short brown hair

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

Piloting a space shuttle makes sex seem trite. Now, to be fair, the amount of sex you can get by being a shuttle pilot does leave you fairly spoiled in that area. Nevertheless, your priorities are clear. You can get laid any time you like. You've only flown in space once. Given the choice, you'd go celibate for the rest of your life to earn another STS patch. Fortunately, it probably won't come to that.

For the last 18 months, you have been training for a classified, unpublicized rendezvous mission. It's called BLACKSAT, but you know little beyond the name. The language on the security documents was pretty severe. There are some peculiar features. The emphasis on EVA (extravehicular activity) makes sense, but it also seems that you might be bringing non-astronaut personnel along. Who could you be taking into space who is not an astronaut, but who still is entrusted with a secret mission?

GEAR AND NOTES

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

SPAY (COMMANDER): He's a good flier. If you can't be at the stick yourself, there's nobody you'd rather have in control. Air Force, like yourself. He's been a little high-strung since his divorce, though.

TURNER (FLIGHT SURGEON): You flirted for a while but nothing came of it. That's fine. DeeDee is great. You have trained with her and absolutely trust her with your life.

BELTON (MISSION SPECIALIST): What an asshole. You two have a cold, distant, professional relationship. Spay gives him credit for being a rare African American flier, but that doesn't mean he's good. You have seen him fly, and he's stiff, joyless, and lacking in all grace, even in something as fun as a T-38. No wonder he's stuck as a mission specialist, screwing around in a Manned Mobility Unit or MMU. You know he made a bunch of carrier landings, blah blah, but he has the soul of an accountant.

HAMLET (MISSION SPECIALIST): It must burn him up inside that he got shunted over into MMU training instead of the pilot's seat. That's kind of humiliating for an Air Force flier. To be fair, he never was a test pilot like you, and never saw combat like you and Mike.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED
Parachuting	DEX
SCUBA	Swim

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	40%	1D4−1		

ARMOR

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	11	55%	Hit Points (HP)	11	
Constitution (CON)	11	55%	Willpower Points (WP)	13	
Dexterity (DEX)	18	90%	Sanity Points (SAN)	70	
Intelligence (INT)	13	65%	Breaking Point (BP)		56
Power (POW)	14	70%			
Charisma (CHA)	9	45%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
NASA	9

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Patriotism
Going Back Into Space
Sexual Adventurism
The Joy of Flying
(Defined by the Player)

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	10%	Ride	10%
Alertness	60%	Forensics	0%	Science: Meteorology	30%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	10%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	30%	Search	20%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	50%	Medicine	0%	Survival	30%
Bureaucracy	30%	Melee Weapons	30%	Swim	40%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science: Air	30%	Unarmed Combat	40%
Craft: Electrician	40%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	60%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Craft (Mechanic)	40%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	50%	Pilot (Spacecraft)	60%
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%	Pilot (Space Suit)	40%
Dodge	30%	Pilot: Airplane	90%	Science (Physics)	30%
Drive	50%				
Firearms	30%	Psychotherapy	10%		

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PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER
Deirdre Turner, M.D.	NASA Flight Surgeon

SEX	AGE	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION
☒ F ☐ M ☐ ________	51	African American, smooth-featured, with short, graying hair

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

Charlotte Whitton said, “Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult.” Charlotte Whitton was never a NASA astronaut. You are surrounded by decorated combat veterans and the world’s best test pilots who went looking for bigger challenges. Good luck doing anything twice as well. These people get competitive about eating pancakes. You did a psych rotation during your internship and have some theories about this sort of success obsession. Most of them would rather die than be weak, and would rather be weak than look weak.

You know for a fact that you were the third choice for the mission. You only got into the rotation because one military doctor failed a psych eval and another had a transient ischemic attack, probably stress-related. You’re also well aware that the shuttle program is shutting down. If you don’t go this time, you won’t get to. The thought of doing all this training for nothing devastates you.

You have been granted BLACKSAT clearance for this mission, and you know there been no publicity for it. It’s all very hush-hush. You’re not even sure what BLACKSAT clearance means, but the papers you signed had some severe language.

You know it’s a rendezvous with an orbiting object, and your training emphasis has suggested you might be taking care of non-astronauts. You have tried questioning Scalzo and Woolrich, and gotten the impression that Scalzo doesn’t know and Woolrich isn’t telling.

GEAR AND NOTES

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

SPAY (COMMANDER): A solid type who takes his missions very, very seriously. You can only imagine the sobriety that will attend a classified military flight.

McMILLAN (PILOT): An arrogant son of a bitch. He flirted with you until you made it pellucidly crystal clear that you were not interested. Still, you can work with him, even if he does call you “DeeDee.”

BELTON (MISSION SPECIALIST): Luke is focused, careful, and extremely knowledgable about everything you have ever seen him have to know. A Navy pilot, electronic engineer, and expert spacewalker. As an African American officer, he surely had to overcome more than his share of professional obstacles, but he never admits to them, even nonverbally.

HAMLET (MISSION SPECIALIST): Despite his name, Hamlet is a cheerful, eager-to-please kind. The can-do, power-of-positive-thinking spirit gets a little thick sometimes, but it is hard to hold it against him. He has pinchable baby cheeks, not that you’ve ever grabbed one.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED
Parachuting	DEX
SCUBA	Swim

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	40%	1D4−1		

ARMOR

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	10	50%	Hit Points (HP)	12	
Constitution (CON)	14	70%	Willpower Points (WP)	13	
Dexterity (DEX)	11	55%	Sanity Points (SAN)	65	
Intelligence (INT)	16	80%	Breaking Point (BP)		52
Power (POW)	13	65%			
Charisma (CHA)	12	60%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
Mom and dad (Rose and Martin)	12

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Following the Hippocratic Oath
Exploring the Unknown
Demonstrating Excellence
(Defined by the Player)
(Defined by the Player)

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	70%	Ride	10%
Alertness	20%	Forensics	0%	Science: Biology	70%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	10%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	0%	Search	40%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	30%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	60%
Athletics	30%	Medicine	80%	Survival	10%
Bureaucracy	50%	Melee Weapons	30%	Swim	50%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science:	0%	Unarmed Combat	40%
Craft: Electronics	20%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	10%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%		
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	60%		
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	70%		
Dodge	30%	Pilot: Space Suit	30%		
Drive	20%				
Firearms	20%	Psychotherapy	60%		

RESTRICTED

PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER
Lieutenant Commander Luke Belton	U.S. Navy Pilot; Shuttle Mission Specialist

SEX	AGE	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION
☐ F ☒ M ☐ ________	44	African American, thin, serious, with short black hair

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

The lowest grade you've ever gotten was a B in an art class. You were first in your class at Annapolis. Father's an electrician engineer (like you) and he always had time for your football games. Your mom ran an art gallery. Yet time and again, the public sees you in a space suit and thinks "affirmative action." Either they hate you (without knowing you) because they think you must have stolen a spot from a more qualified white man, or they admire you (without knowing you) because they figure you nobly worked your way out of the ghetto by resisting the drug game. They don't see the 300 carrier landings you made as a Navy pilot. But you still give it your all and do your best because that's all you really know how to do. Screw it. A lot of the public is ignorant and weak.

For the last 18 months, you have been training for a classified, unpublicized rendezvous mission. It's called BLACKSAT, but you know little beyond the name. The language on the security documents was pretty severe. There are some peculiar features. The emphasis on EVA (extravehicular activity) makes sense, but it also seems that you might be bringing non-astronaut personnel along. Who could you be taking into space who is not an astronaut, but who still is entrusted with a secret mission?

GEAR AND NOTES

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

SPAY (COMMANDER): The man has his stuff wired tight. He can be condescending, but at least he doesn't insult your intelligence by trying to be your buddy. As long as the two of you keep things professional, you work together quite well.

McMILLAN (PILOT): A swaggering Air Force prick. You prefer to interact with him as little as possible. It was cruel of God to make a perfect flier out of such a flawed human being, but the guy is just off the chart. Decorated combat flier, test pilot—he makes it look easy because, for him, it is.

TURNER (FLIGHT SURGEON): You like Dr. Turner. You trained with her and, though she hides it very well, she has a hard-driven core of ambition. You would not want her mad at you.

HAMLET (MISSION SPECIALIST): He may be the most tolerable person the Air Force ever sent to NASA training. You did a lot of EVA training together, and he was always handing someone a towel or a water bottle or offering an encouraging word. Well-intentioned.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED
Parachuting	DEX
SCUBA	Swim

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	40%	1D4−1		

ARMOR

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	9	45%	Hit Points (HP)	12	
Constitution (CON)	14	70%	Willpower Points (WP)	14	
Dexterity (DEX)	13	65%	Sanity Points (SAN)	70	
Intelligence (INT)	15	75%	Breaking Point (BP)		56
Power (POW)	14	70%			
Charisma (CHA)	10	50%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
Mom and dad (Sadie and Doug)	10
Wife (Donna)	10

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Going Into Space and Making History
Patriotism
Living the American Dream
(Defined by the Player)
(Defined by the Player)

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	10%	Ride	10%
Alertness	60%	Forensics	0%	Science: Meteorology	40%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	10%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	30%	Search	20%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	50%	Medicine	0%	Survival	40%
Bureaucracy	30%	Melee Weapons	30%	Swim	40%
Computer Science	60%	Military Science: Air	50%	Unarmed Combat	40%
Craft: Electrician	70%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	50%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Craft (Mechanic)	40%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	20%	Pilot (Space Suit)	70%
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%	Science (Physics)	30%
Dodge	30%	Pilot: Airplane	60%		
Drive	20%				
Firearms	20%	Psychotherapy	10%		

RESTRICTED
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PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER
Captain Daniel Hamlet	USAF Pilot; Shuttle Mission Specialist

SEX	AGE	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION
☐ F ☒ M ☐ ________	42	Caucasian, fit and trim, good-looking, with short brown hair

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	10	50%	Hit Points (HP)	12	
Constitution (CON)	14	70%	Willpower Points (WP)	12	
Dexterity (DEX)	15	75%	Sanity Points (SAN)	60	
Intelligence (INT)	14	70%	Breaking Point (BP)		48
Power (POW)	12	60%			
Charisma (CHA)	12	60%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
Crewmates	12
NASA	12

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Patriotism
Displaying the Right Stuff
Going Into Space and Becoming Elite
(Defined by the Player)
(Defined by the Player)

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

You once heard an alcoholic describe himself as "the turd the whole world revolves around." That blend of self-importance and self-loathing struck a chord. You feel like a fraud. Everything you have accomplished—high marks in school, Air Force academy, F-15 pilot, becoming an astronaut—seems insignificant and at the same time incredibly important. You always achieve, but it's never enough. You were salutatorian, not valedictorian. You were a pilot, but never made the test pilot program. You made it to NASA, but you're a mission specialist instead of a mission commander. You are better than so many other people. Just not enough of them.

It's a sickness. A weakness. You almost wish you could talk to someone about it, like a psychologist, but there's no way in hell you're going to jeopardize your standing in the program over your feelings. The best estimate you have seen is that the human race has numbered about 107 billion people. Fewer than 600 have left the planet. Maybe if you can join that elite, it will finally stop your worries.

You are sure none of the others in the program have these sorts of doubts.

For the last 18 months, you have been training for a classified, unpublicized rendezvous mission. It's called BLACKSAT, but you know little beyond the name. The language on the security documents was pretty severe. There are some peculiar features. The emphasis on EVA (extravehicular activity) makes sense, but it also seems that you might be bringing non-astronaut personnel along. Who could you be taking into space who is not an astronaut, but who still is entrusted with a secret mission?

GEAR AND NOTES

WHAT YOU THINK OF THE OTHERS

SPAY (COMMANDER): Oh God, you slept with his wife. They're divorced now, and you're sure he doesn't know, but yeah. You ran into Janice at the grocery store and wound up at a hotel, and then there were a couple more times, and then they got divorced and she never called you and you never called her. It's awful. Mike means so much more to you than she ever could. You're going to make it up to him. You have to.

McMILLAN (PILOT): The guy is a great pilot, but one time you saw him reduced to laughing tears by a Jimmy Kimmel routine. Jimmy. Kimmel. And after that, Dirk McMillan was one of the very few people in the program you have never envied.

TURNER (FLIGHT SURGEON): You had a weird crush on Dr. Turner. It was nothing sexual or erotic—that's not your nature—but you admired her so much that you felt stupid and tongue-tied around her. Lots of training has damped down the worst of it, but you still have to work to cover it up. She is a formidable woman.

BELTON (MISSION SPECIALIST): An engineer and Navy pilot. A really nice guy, but focused and serious. You have done hours upon hours of EVA training together, and it has been bad for your self-esteem. You just can't shake the feeling that anything you can do, he can do better.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED
Parachuting	DEX
SCUBA	Swim

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	10%	Ride	10%
Alertness	50%	Forensics	0%	Science: Meteorology	40%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	10%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	0%	Search	20%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	50%	Medicine	0%	Survival	40%
Bureaucracy	30%	Melee Weapons	30%	Swim	40%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science: Air	30%	Unarmed Combat	40%
Craft: Electrician	40%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	60%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Craft (Mechanic)	80%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	20%	Pilot (Space Suit)	50%
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%	Science (Physics)	40%
Dodge	30%	Pilot: Airplane	50%	Language (Chinese)	50%
Drive	20%				
Firearms	20%	Psychotherapy	10%		

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	40%	1D4−1		

ARMOR

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

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3 OCT 2011

// Night Visions //

“There is nothing better than getting shot at and missed. It’s really great.”

—Gen. James Mattis, former U.S. Secretary of Defense

“Take Arms.”

—Motto of the 35th Infantry Regiment

Introduction

It is October 2011, the country is Afghanistan, and our protagonists are American soldiers kicking knee-deep in the shit of war: First Squad of the First Rifle Platoon (“Doom School”) of Company C (“Charlie”) of the 2nd Battalion of the 35th Infantry Regiment (“Cacti”) of the 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (“Broncos”) of the 25th Infantry Division (“Tropic Lightning”). Stationed in northern Kunar province at Combat Outpost (“COP”) Honaker Miracle, the Cacti are six months into a year-long assignment at a remote outpost in one of the roughest border zones in the 10-year-old Afghanistan war.

Like most war-zone soldiers, Doom School’s troops are tossed back and forth between endless boredom and instants of ghastly excitement. But they’re bound for terror of a distinctly different sort when they encounter a little-known group of Afghan hill people called the Gaths.

The Players’ Characters

Have each player choose a character from **PREGENERATED CHARACTERS**, beginning on page 62, starting with Foreign Service Officer Samantha Sutterberg and Staff Sergeant Kryptowicz. Others can play the young men of Fire Team Alpha. Other possible player characters include Specialist Bolger, the platoon medic, and Yasir Marwat, a freelance translator working for Sutterberg.

We sometimes use the general term “soldier” to refer to any of the players’ characters.

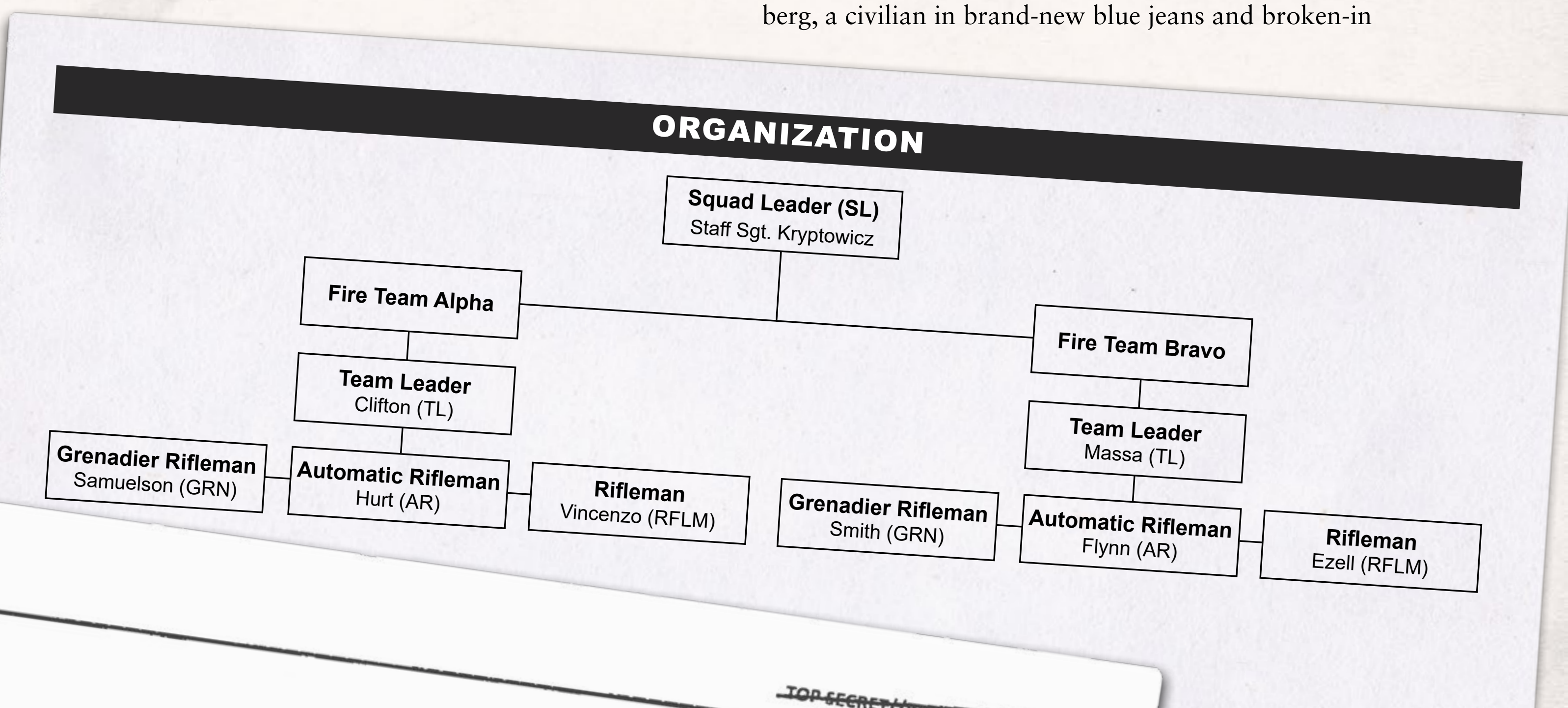
Northern Kunar Province

The borderland between Kunar and Nuristan provinces includes fertile river valleys, scabrous scrubland, and the Himalayan heights of the Hindu Kush Mountains. Parts of it are modestly clement and parts are awesomely beautiful, but very few parts are both. Paved roads and dirt tracks go between towns and villages. The dominant colors are tan and a weedy green, shading to white when snow flies in the autumn. The snowfalls have been intermittent and light, but every week it seems a bit colder and a bit darker. The snow stays longer and deeper, sucking up the dust of the roads to form a silty layer of slush everywhere there’s a patch of shadow.

The valleys and plains are interrupted with broad, stumpy trees, but as the terrain rises they are replaced by soaring evergreens. The adobe buildings are generally square and the same dust-tan hue as the naked ground.

Briefing

At 0800, the nine soldiers of First Rifle Platoon, First Squad are called to a meeting by their platoon leader, Lieutenant Nagel, who neither sounds nor looks particularly happy. He introduces Samantha Sutterberg, a civilian in brand-new blue jeans and broken-in


ORGANIZATION
Squad Leader (SL)
Staff Sgt. Kryptowicz
Fire Team Alpha
Team Leader
Clifton (TL)
Grenadier Rifleman
Samuelson (GRN)
Automatic Rifleman
Hurt (AR)
Rifleman
Vincenzo (RFLM)
Fire Team Bravo
Team Leader
Massa (TL)
Grenadier Rifleman
Smith (GRN)
Automatic Rifleman
Flynn (AR)
Rifleman
Ezell (RFLM)

Take Arms

Kryptowicz's player should read this aloud or paraphrase it for the players.

The 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment ("Cacti") fought in northeast Afghanistan in 2004–2005, then in Tikrit, Iraq, in 2009–2010. The Cacti spent a year training, and then deployed back to northeast Afghanistan for a one-year tour in spring 2011.

It was an unhappy return for the few career soldiers who were last here in 2005. They had fought hard to establish a U.S. presence in the region, and handed it over to other units who saw constant conflict with an insurgency that seemed to feed on defeat. In late 2009, the U.S. abandoned four bases on the Nuristan-Kunar border after heavy fighting that led to Combat Outpost Keating—stuck at the bottom of a valley—being partially overrun. The U.S. handed the region over to carefully-trained Afghan National Army forces in 2010. The ANA in the region promptly fell apart. Now the Cacti are back.

Over the past summer, the Cacti spent a hard week attacking the Taliban in the northern Watapur Valley in Operation HAMMER DOWN. They still send daily patrols into the southern Watapur Valley, making regular contact with insurgents. Most patrols follow a similar pattern: hike or drive to a checkpoint, come under fire, engage the enemy and fix his location, and call in Apache gunships (or mortar fire from COP Honaker Miracle, or artillery fire from nearby Forward Operating Base ("FOB") Blessing, terrain permitting) to destroy the enemy.

Watapur Valley

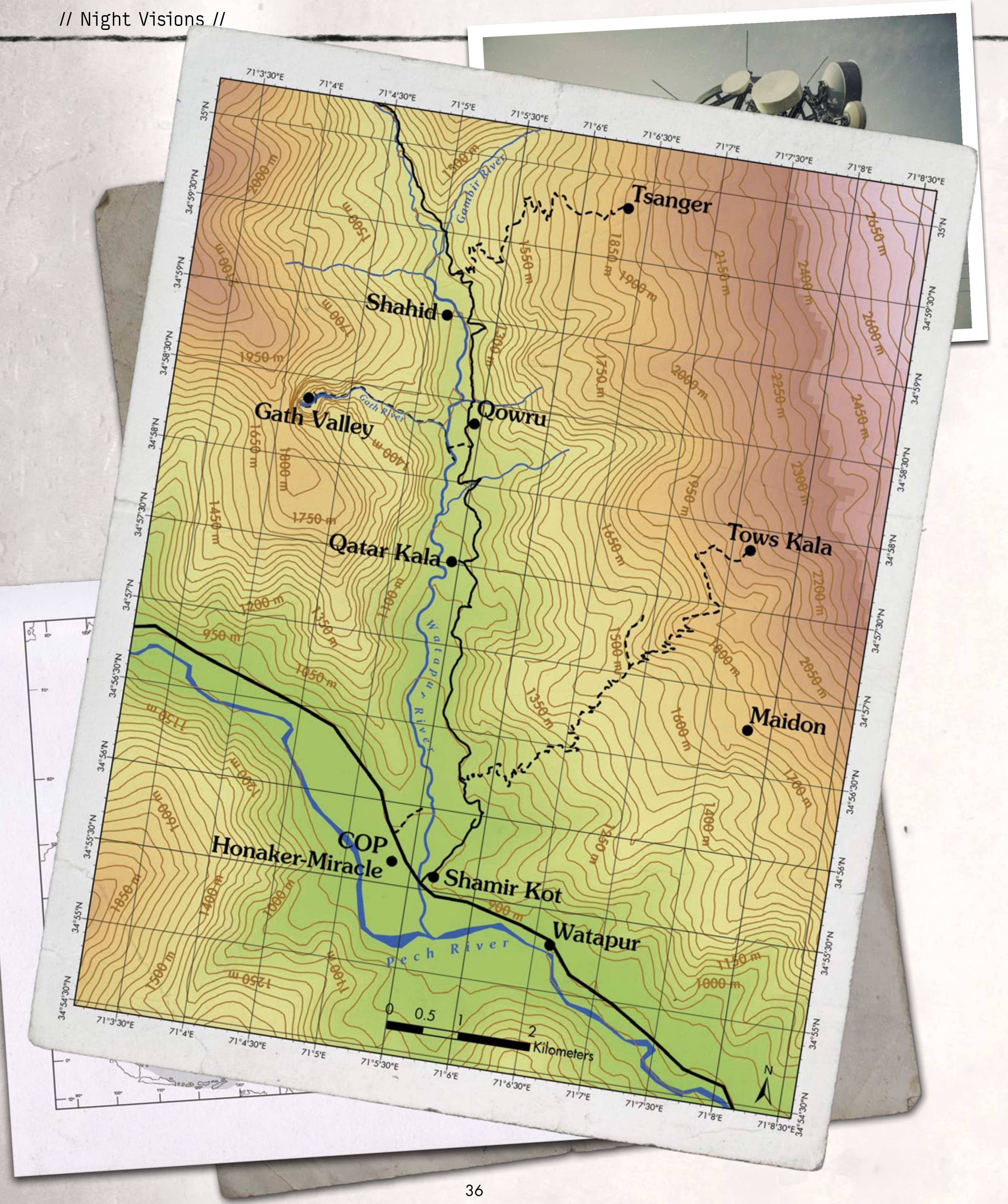
Another player should read this aloud or paraphrase it for the players.

Charlie Company is stationed at Combat Outpost Honaker Miracle, a sprawling compound at the mouth of Watapur Valley, right next to the village of Shamir Kowt.

Watapur Valley is about 18 km long, with a well-farmed valley floor 5 to 10 km wide. Forested ridgelines and summits rise far overhead, broken by countless narrow gorges and valleys. Halfway up the valley, the slopes begin to close in as you approach the villages of Qatar Kala, Qowru, and Shahid. In 2008, American soldiers built a medical clinic at Qatar Kala to be run by Afghan doctors, only to have the Taliban destroy it as soon as they could. All the villages stand on the east slopes, the west slopes being far steeper and more rugged.

Villages in the southern half of the valley are not actively hostile, but they wish the Americans would stay away and not draw trouble. Years of conflict have created a transient population as families migrate seasonally, farming in the valley floor in the spring and fall and herding in the hills during summer's fierce fighting. Nevertheless, village elders invite U.S. soldiers to tribal council meetings in their adobe houses and compounds. Children follow U.S. soldiers around, happily asking for treats.

North of Qatar Kala, cooperation falls off sharply. The larger villages on the northern heights hold most of the valley's population of 10,000 to 20,000: Tows Kala, Tsangar, Katar Darya, Sero Kalay, Gambir, and Zawardiwuz. They have long supported training camps for Afghan and Pakistani insurgents, lying along a "ratline" of camps and villages where insurgents move between the two nations. The high northern villages were the focus of the summer's fighting.


Tsanger
Gambir River
Shahid
Gath Valley
Gath River
Qowru
Qatar Kala
Tows Kala
Watapur River
Maidon
COP
Honaker-Miracle
Shamir Kot
Watapur
Pech River
0
0.5
1
2
Kilometers
N

Doc Martens boots. She is tanned and fine-featured, and looks like she is finding it hard to breathe in her flak jacket.

Nagel says Sutterberg is from the State Department. Kryptowicz is taking the two fire teams of Squad One and the platoon medic to escort her and a translator to Gath Valley. Sutterberg and Kryptowicz will negotiate with the local tribe, the Gaths. The State Department is providing gifts to hand them. Kryptowicz is to make sure the soldiers come home with a concrete agreement for cooperation against the Taliban, including setting up an outpost in Gath Valley.

Nagel says he assumes the soldiers have heard of the Gaths. Gath Valley is only about 4 km from base, but even after constant fighting in Watapur Valley, its existence comes as news to many of the Cacti. The soldiers of Fire Team Bravo are bored and stay quiet. If none from Fire Team Alpha say they know anything about Gath Valley, he dryly congratulates them on keeping their brains Army Strong.

What the Soldiers Know

The soldiers can make **INT×5** rolls to see what (if anything) they remember about the Gaths. With a success, each knows what follows.

Right Stuff or Kryptowicz

Gath Valley is only a few clicks away but no Americans have gone there. Something about the mountain and weather conditions there make helicopter access and close air support a nonstarter.

Right Stuff

One of the locals used the phrase "wicked as a Gath" to describe the Taliban's foreign fighters.

Chuckles

When Chuckles tried to get a translator to ask locals where he could get laid, they took great offense and said something about Gaths within the context of sexual deviance. Even better, the Gaths are supposed to grow really good opium.

Hoagie or Rambam

One time they were watching a DVD of *The Hills Have Eyes* when an old man who worked in the kitchen started watching from the doorway. His English was terrible, but he called them "American Gaths."

About Gath Valley

Nagel covers details about the geography and geology of Gath Valley gathered from overflights and satellite imagery. Many of the soldiers start zoning out in boredom.

THE VALLEY: Gath Valley rises steeply from the Watapur Valley floor. It is river-carved and riddled with caves. The mountainsides rise up sharply on either side, providing excellent cover against artillery and gunships. There was a shallow waterfall between the valley and the plains beyond when the Gaths first arrived. They dammed the water to create a lake. Entering the valley means going over the dam. The dam looks fragile even in the distant photos.

GETTING IN: Any would-be invader's options are (1) come through a tight stone choke-point, (2) rappel down sheer cliffs, or (3) apply air power. Unpredictable mountain winds make air power unreliable. Could the valley be taken? Sure, if you positioned artillery perfectly and shelled it savagely to drive the inhabitants into those deep caves, then sent troops into those caves to dig them out. So far, no one has wanted to bother.

SUTTERBERG: Nagel turns the presentation over to Samantha Sutterberg, from the State Department, who has a presentation and can answer other questions about this mission. Give Sutterberg's player the **SUTTERBERG'S PRESENTATION** handout.

Hurry Up and Wait

Nagel orders the soldiers to fall in pack gear for five days be ready to roll in 60 minutes. They will take three M-ATVs to Gath Valley. It is a short drive, so with any luck, they can get in, make a deal, and come home before the Taliban set up an ambush.

Sutterberg's Presentation

Sutterberg's player should read this presentation aloud. If you have access to a computer, you can augment it with a PDF of a PowerPoint-style presentation on the Gath Valley mission available at delta-green.com. Search for "Gath Valley."

"The Gaths seem to be their own distinct ethic group. There is a long history of conflict between the Gaths, other local tribes, and the Pakistanis, and the Russians when they were here. But no one has ever succeeded in taking Gath Valley.

"The State Department wants to gather up the marginalized elements of Afghan society. If we can show that the coalition is open even to the Gaths, that may make it easier for other independent tribes to get along.

"Finally, if the U.S. can base forces in Gath Valley, it can be a strongpoint that will allow better control over Watapur Valley. Gath Valley is clearly a defensible position. The Gaths have held it for centuries against all comers.

"Your battles with the Taliban over the summer have left them disorganized. This is our chance to make good on that fight."

Answers to Possible Questions

Read aloud or paraphrase these responses.

GATH CULTURE AND LANGUAGE: "This is a fascinating subject. The word 'Gath' is not of local origin. No one is really sure what it means or where it comes from. It seems clear that the Gaths are culturally distinct from their neighbors. At the very least, they speak a narrow dialect. It seems more likely they actually have their own language, the way the Basques have the Euskadi language in Europe."

IS THAT COALITION IDEA FOR REAL? "A team at the embassy wants to cast a broad net to foster an 'Afghan' identity that offsets religious, ethnic, and tribal suspicion. If nothing else, a defensible enclave of prickly individualists could be a strategic asset."

DOES THIS MEAN WE ARE COOL WITH OPIUM NOW? "One thing at a time. The Gaths trade with their neighbors out of necessity. But they are largely self-sufficient, herding on the hills and farming in their valley. Some opium cultivation may occur. If the U.S. can strike a deal with the Gaths, they can encourage trade to give the tribe other options."

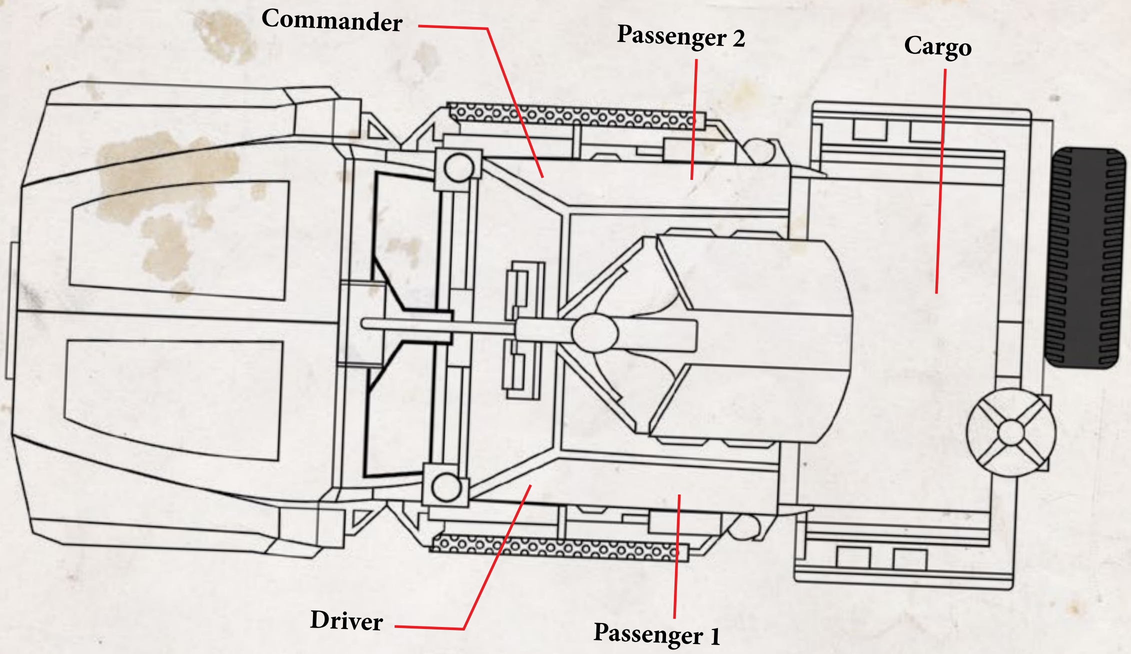
HOW ARE THE GATHS ARMED? "Reports say the Gaths are well armed with old Russian weapons, maybe even artillery."

ARE THE GATHS TALIBAN? "No. No outsiders have conquered Gath Valley. It is easily defended, and there is no mineral wealth and the soil is poor. It has no tactical significance. Even when the rest of the region was forcibly converted to Islam in the late 19th century, Gath Valley proved too troublesome to bother."

ARE THERE GATHS ANYWHERE ELSE? "There is evidence that a number of Gaths have immigrated to Qatar, doing menial work and sending money home."

WHY DO PEOPLE HATE THE GATHS? "The local mistrust and dislike of Gaths is standard bigotry. They are different and therefore hated."

The Vehicles



The soldiers have three 4x4 Oshkosh M-ATVs (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected All Terrain Vehicles), which they have nicknamed "Shitty," "The Beast," and "Halle Berry." Driving one is a **Heavy Machinery** roll. Each has Armor 20. Each has seating for driver, commander, and two passengers, a gunner's turret, and a small cargo space outside the cabin.

The Beast is equipped with a turreted Mk 19 grenade launcher. It is fired with **Heavy Weapons** and has Lethality 15% (20% if fired in a burst) and a kill radius of 10 meters. It holds 30 rounds. It can be operated manually or using a CROWS (Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station) on a screen from behind the driver seat.

Halle Berry has a turreted M240 machine gun. It is fired with **Heavy Weapons** and has Lethality 15%, a kill radius of 3 meters, and Armor Piercing 3. It can be operated manually or using a CROWS on a screen from behind the driver seat.

Shitty has a turreted M240 machine gun. It is fired with **Heavy Weapons** and has Lethality 15%, a kill radius of 3 meters, and Armor Piercing 3. It can be operated manually or using a CROWS on a screen from behind the driver seat, but everyone knows its CROWS unit is broken. It supposedly got fixed last week, but it still doesn't work worth a damn. If firing from within the cab using CROWS, every attack roll with an even number fails. As always, a failed roll with matching digits is a fumble.

THE BEAST

DRIVER: Vincenzo
COMMANDER: Kryptowicz
GUNNER: Hurt
PASSENGER 1 (CROWS): empty for gunner
PASSENGER 2: Sutterberg
CARGO: Gath gifts

SHITTY

DRIVER: Samuelson
COMMANDER: Clifton
GUNNER: Ezell
PASSENGER 1 (CROWS): empty for gunner
PASSENGER 2: Marwat
CARGO: Gath gifts

HALLE BERRY

DRIVER: Smith
COMMANDER: Massa
GUNNER: Flynn
PASSENGER 1 (CROWS): empty for gunner
PASSENGER 2: Bolger
CARGO: Gath gifts

An hour later, it emerges that a local translator has not yet shown up, so the whole enterprise is on hold. That hour stretches past noon.

During the wait, the soldiers have a chance to log on, make phone calls, or otherwise sniff out Gath gossip. Each character has a chance to pursue one avenue of information.

Battalion Intelligence

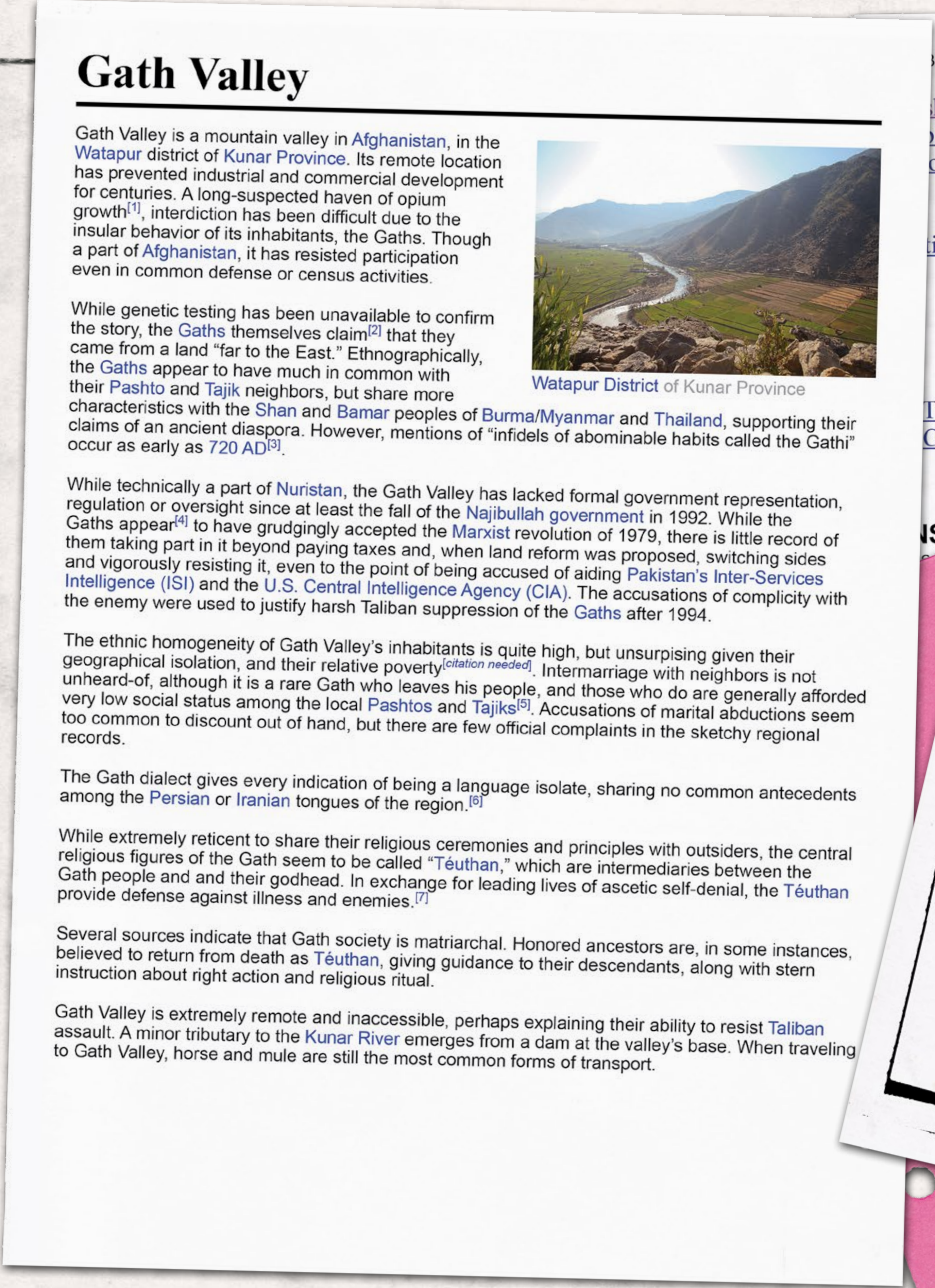
The battalion has a small intelligence staff at FOB Blessing. Any soldier can reach them by phone or radio and attempt a **CHA×5** or **Military Science** (**Land**) test to ask about the Gaths, their valley, or anything about weird ethnic enclaves in the Hindu Kush Mountains.

(DO NOT suggest that Right Stuff consider Air Force sources; but if that player tries it, Right Stuff can talk informally to a pilot in the region who worked with his dad and can provide similar information. He then gets a +20% to his **CHA×5** roll.)

Failure: They have no idea what a "Gath" is, and more importantly, they don't care. *Success:* That valley is covered by a flight guideline recommending not flying over it due to wind hazards. It is unlikely that air support will be forthcoming in that region. There's even scuttlebutt that the Russians had a no-fly zone over the area back during the Eighties.

Google It

A soldier can attempt an **Anthropology** or **History** test to dig deep online. *Failure:* Hand the player the "Gath Valley" handout found on page 41. *Success:* The researcher also finds a blog post entitled "My Summer With the Gaths" by Rinna Lourdes, found on page 42.



Gath Valley

Gath Valley is a mountain valley in Afghanistan, in the Watapur district of Kunar Province. Its remote location has prevented industrial and commercial development for centuries. A long-suspected haven of opium growth[1], interdiction has been difficult due to the insular behavior of its inhabitants, the Gaths. Though a part of Afghanistan, it has resisted participation even in common defense or census activities.

Watapur District of Kunar Province

While genetic testing has been unavailable to confirm the story, the Gaths themselves claim[2] that they came from a land "far to the East." Ethnographically, the Gaths appear to have much in common with their Pashto and Tajik neighbors, but share more characteristics with the Shan and Bamar peoples of Burma/Myanmar and Thailand, supporting their claims of an ancient diaspora. However, mentions of "infidels of abominable habits called the Gathi" occur as early as 720 AD[3].

While technically a part of Nuristan, the Gath Valley has lacked formal government representation, regulation or oversight since at least the fall of the Najibullah government in 1992. While the Gaths appear[4] to have grudgingly accepted the Marxist revolution of 1979, there is little record of them taking part in it beyond paying taxes and, when land reform was proposed, switching sides and vigorously resisting it, even to the point of being accused of aiding Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The accusations of complicity with the enemy were used to justify harsh Taliban suppression of the Gaths after 1994.

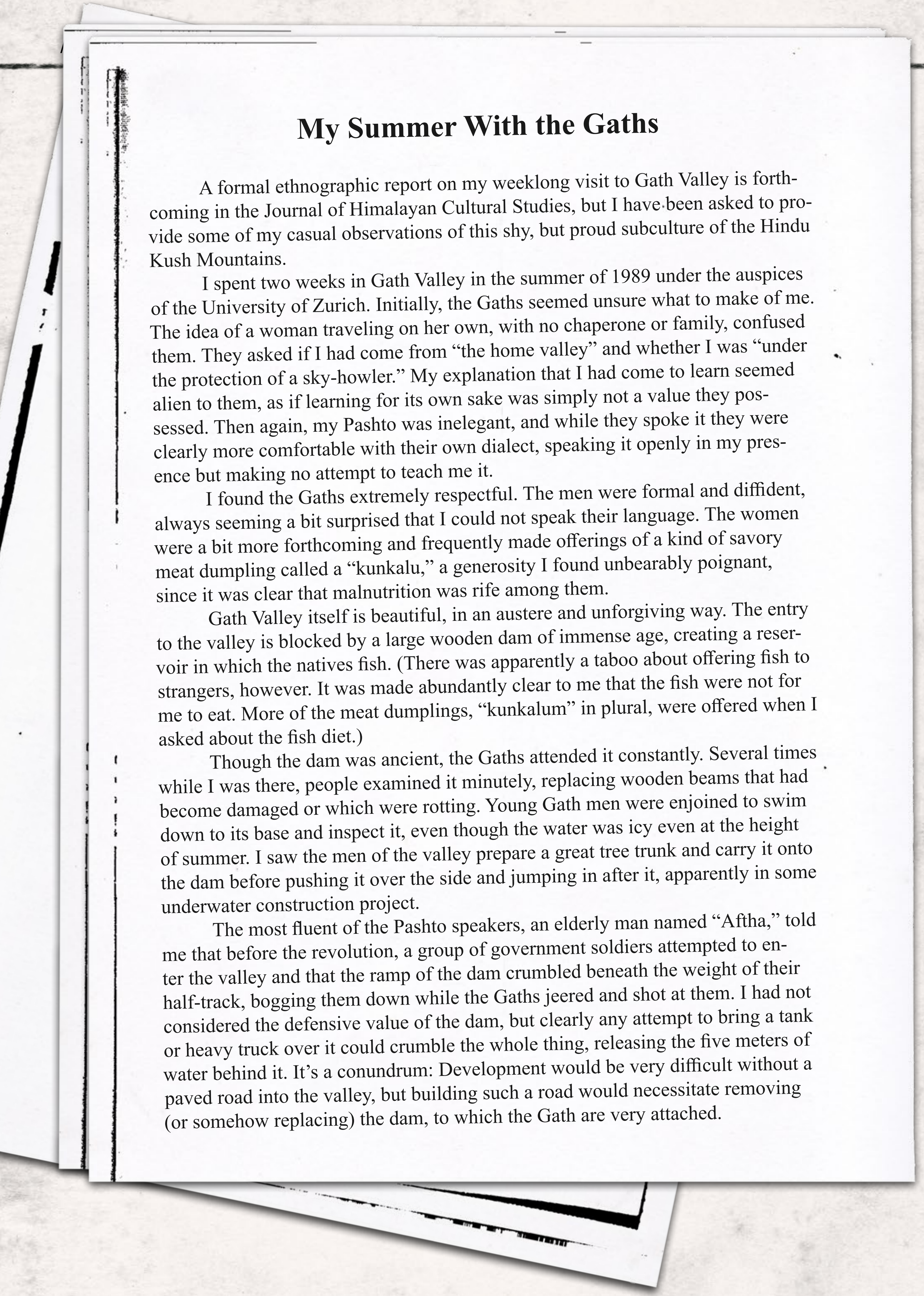
The ethnic homogeneity of Gath Valley's inhabitants is quite high, but unsurpising given their geographical isolation, and their relative poverty[citation needed]. Intermarriage with neighbors is not unheard-of, although it is a rare Gath who leaves his people, and those who do are generally afforded very low social status among the local Pashtos and Tajiks[5]. Accusations of marital abductions seem too common to discount out of hand, but there are few official complaints in the sketchy regional records.

The Gath dialect gives every indication of being a language isolate, sharing no common antecedents among the Persian or Iranian tongues of the region.[6]

While extremely reticent to share their religious ceremonies and principles with outsiders, the central religious figures of the Gath seem to be called "Téuthan," which are intermediaries between the Gath people and and their godhead. In exchange for leading lives of ascetic self-denial, the Téuthan provide defense against illness and enemies.[7]

Several sources indicate that Gath society is matriarchal. Honored ancestors are, in some instances, believed to return from death as Téuthan, giving guidance to their descendants, along with stern instruction about right action and religious ritual.

Gath Valley is extremely remote and inaccessible, perhaps explaining their ability to resist Taliban assault. A minor tributary to the Kunar River emerges from a dam at the valley's base. When traveling to Gath Valley, horse and mule are still the most common forms of transport.



My Summer With the Gaths

A formal ethnographic report on my weeklong visit to Gath Valley is forthcoming in the Journal of Himalayan Cultural Studies, but I have been asked to provide some of my casual observations of this shy, but proud subculture of the Hindu Kush Mountains.

I spent two weeks in Gath Valley in the summer of 1989 under the auspices of the University of Zurich. Initially, the Gaths seemed unsure what to make of me. The idea of a woman traveling on her own, with no chaperone or family, confused them. They asked if I had come from "the home valley" and whether I was "under the protection of a sky-howler." My explanation that I had come to learn seemed alien to them, as if learning for its own sake was simply not a value they possessed. Then again, my Pashto was inelegant, and while they spoke it they were clearly more comfortable with their own dialect, speaking it openly in my presence but making no attempt to teach me it.

I found the Gaths extremely respectful. The men were formal and diffident, always seeming a bit surprised that I could not speak their language. The women were a bit more forthcoming and frequently made offerings of a kind of savory meat dumpling called a "kunkalu," a generosity I found unbearably poignant, since it was clear that malnutrition was rife among them.

Gath Valley itself is beautiful, in an austere and unforgiving way. The entry to the valley is blocked by a large wooden dam of immense age, creating a reservoir in which the natives fish. (There was apparently a taboo about offering fish to strangers, however. It was made abundantly clear to me that the fish were not for me to eat. More of the meat dumplings, "kunkalum" in plural, were offered when I asked about the fish diet.)

Though the dam was ancient, the Gaths attended it constantly. Several times while I was there, people examined it minutely, replacing wooden beams that had become damaged or which were rotting. Young Gath men were enjoined to swim down to its base and inspect it, even though the water was icy even at the height of summer. I saw the men of the valley prepare a great tree trunk and carry it onto the dam before pushing it over the side and jumping in after it, apparently in some underwater construction project.

The most fluent of the Pashto speakers, an elderly man named "Aftha," told me that before the revolution, a group of government soldiers attempted to enter the valley and that the ramp of the dam crumbled beneath the weight of their half-track, bogging them down while the Gaths jeered and shot at them. I had not considered the defensive value of the dam, but clearly any attempt to bring a tank or heavy truck over it could crumble the whole thing, releasing the five meters of water behind it. It's a conundrum: Development would be very difficult without a paved road into the valley, but building such a road would necessitate removing (or somehow replacing) the dam, to which the Gath are very attached.

Consulting the Locals

Elderly locals cook, clean, and do menial tasks at the base. Asking around requires a **Foreign Language** test with Dari or Pashto. *Failure:* The Afghan laughs and says the Gaths are primitives, buttoned up in their valley eating each other. The idea that they could serve as allies against the Taliban is foolish. The only reason no one has wiped them off the face of the Earth is that their cave-riddled valley is absolutely worthless. *Success:* The Afghan looks nervous and wants to know what the Americans want with the Gaths. Before they can even answer, he says that if they're going in to kill them all, it's about time. The Gath abduct little girls for wives, or for worse purposes. When the Russians tried to take a helicopter into the valley to kill them, the Gaths whistled it down to the ground with demons, whom they sleep with.

The Translator

The translator drives up in an old pickup truck at 1300 hours, five hours late. He is a young, urban Afghan named Yasir Marwat. Sutterberg recommended him as a State Department asset known for being bright, ambitious and enthusiastic. For details, see **DEPUTIZATION DOSSIER: YASIR MARWAT** on page 61.

Marwat is in his early thirties, dressed traditionally except for a ratty pair of Nike Air Jordans. He smiles constantly and peppers his speech with "Okay, Chief!" and "Right on!"

The truck has a handful of crates with medical supplies and, far more prominently, an even half-dozen Chinese-made Type 69 RPGs (functionally identical to the RPG-7s popular among the Taliban) stacked in padded crates of their owns.

Tell Sutterberg's player that Marwat was given antibiotics, vitamins, food supplies, and blankets to bring for the Gaths, and *no weapons*. This is not supposed to be a mission to arm the Gaths.

Marwat took it upon himself to "exchange" some of the "pointless stuff" from the truck for "things the Gaths would like." If asked how he knows that, Marwat is vague and says he asked around. Marwat traded the vitamins, half the food, and half the medicine for rocket propelled grenades. He considers it an excellent deal.

Sutterberg's player can decide whether to bring the rockets or leave them at the base.

Yasir Marwat is an energetic chatterbox who wants to hear everything about America, but he gladly talks about the region if asked. His English is good as a second language, but it's heavily canted towards money and military matters. He estimates that there can't be more than 500 Gaths in the valley, but that they are all heavily armed and tough. (If pressed, he says "500" counts only adults.) One thing Marwat won't do is suggest that he can get drugs or women. He has spent enough time around Sutterberg to know that could get him cut off, and he has been making some nice sums working for State.

The Gath Dam

The weather is starting to turn. High winds in the upper atmosphere blow clouds and light snowfall down from the higher mountains. It is bad weather for drones, let alone medical dust-offs.

The dirt road comes to a riverbed with a narrow trickle running down its center amidst a thatch of wild grass. This is the discharge from Gath Valley's dam, and following it upstream leads to their enclave.

The Gath dam is a monument to primitive tenacity. It's about five meters tall, composed of wood and stone and thickened mud. It has obviously been patched and redressed many, many, many times. A ramp leads up the left side to a trail that leads past the lake and into the valley. A large, crude blockhouse of cement and junk metal overlooks it with three Gaths on guard inside.

A light pickup truck could go up the ramp without anything more ominous than snapping branches, cracks in the mortar, and a few stones falling. But it's obvious that even a single M-ATV would cause the ramp to collapse and tear a hole in the side of the dam. The same happens if someone hits the dam with a grenade. (Bullets poke spurting little holes but do no structural harm.)

Bursting the Dam

If the dam bursts, a nearly three-meter-high flash flood rushes down the streambed out of the valley. The water is not strong enough to pick up an M-ATV but could roll it if it hits broadside-on. The vehicle gets stuck until at least an hour of hard labor gets it out.

At the bottom of the drained lake, great skeletons of Téuthan have been ritually dumped for centuries. They have human-like skulls and forearms. Instead of graying and decaying like human bones, the exotic compounds of Téuthan skeletons have crystallized. Seeing them costs 0/1D4 **SAN** from the unnatural. In open air, they are extremely fragile. Even walking close to one crumbles it to dust. Within days of the dam bursting, the skeletons are only crystalline powder.

The Gaths in the guard box try to warn the M-ATVs away from the dam. If the soldiers try to drive over the dam or threaten it, the guards come out shouting and shooting into the air.

Meeting the Gaths

The dam's three guards come out to greet the soldiers. Another dozen or so Gaths come up from the village. They are nonplussed and don't know exactly what to make of these foreigners. If for some reason the soldiers arrive at night, the guards want them to stay outside the valley until morning. If the soldiers show gifts for the village, the guards remain somewhat stiff and reserved, but they allow a few visitors (Sutterberg, Marwat, and the players' soldiers) into the village despite the hour. Any who remain outside the village pass a quiet, cold night camped in and around the M-ATVs and must make a **CON×5** test or gain no benefit from sleep. In the daylight, the Gaths still admit only a few visitors (the player characters and Marwat).

The Gaths

The Gaths have sallow, heavily tanned skin, and their features blend the prominent noses and striking grey eyes of their Pashto neighbors with flatter faces, straighter hair, and epicanthic folds from an origin elsewhere to the east.

All Gaths show signs of rampant malnutrition. Their gums are pale, indicating anemia or a protein-poor diet. Their skin looks loose and wrinkled, their teeth are dull and mottled, and their fingernails show warps and fissures. Some of them move stiffly due to weak joints and muscles.

They dress in layers of robes, but the women go unveiled, and with their hair long and unbound, or in simple ponytails and braids. Men wear a utilitarian bowl cut and keep their beards trimmed to exactly fist-length under their chins. Both sexes are clean, as their culture is fastidious about washing both clothing and person.

After the soldiers have had an hour or two among the Gaths and have met a couple dozen of them, they notice two things. First, the shorter a Gath is, the more likely he or she is to look healthy. Second, a few have square scars, about two inches on a side, peeking out of their sleeves or on their calves.

Gath History

Over 1,500 years ago in Thailand, an ethnic group acquired an unnatural patron and left Thailand for Afghanistan. They have stayed in Gath Valley ever since, becoming less and less human every year. Analysis of Gath DNA would fascinate any biologist in a way that would make Delta Green very nervous. That is not a likely result of this operation. If somehow it does emerge, work it into your campaign and setting as you see fit.

The Gath Today

There are about 1,000 self-identified Gaths, but close to a third of that number live outside the valley. About ten percent of those travelers (call it 30 people worldwide) are true believers desperate to return. Perhaps 80 assimilate to outside culture, staying in Qatar or

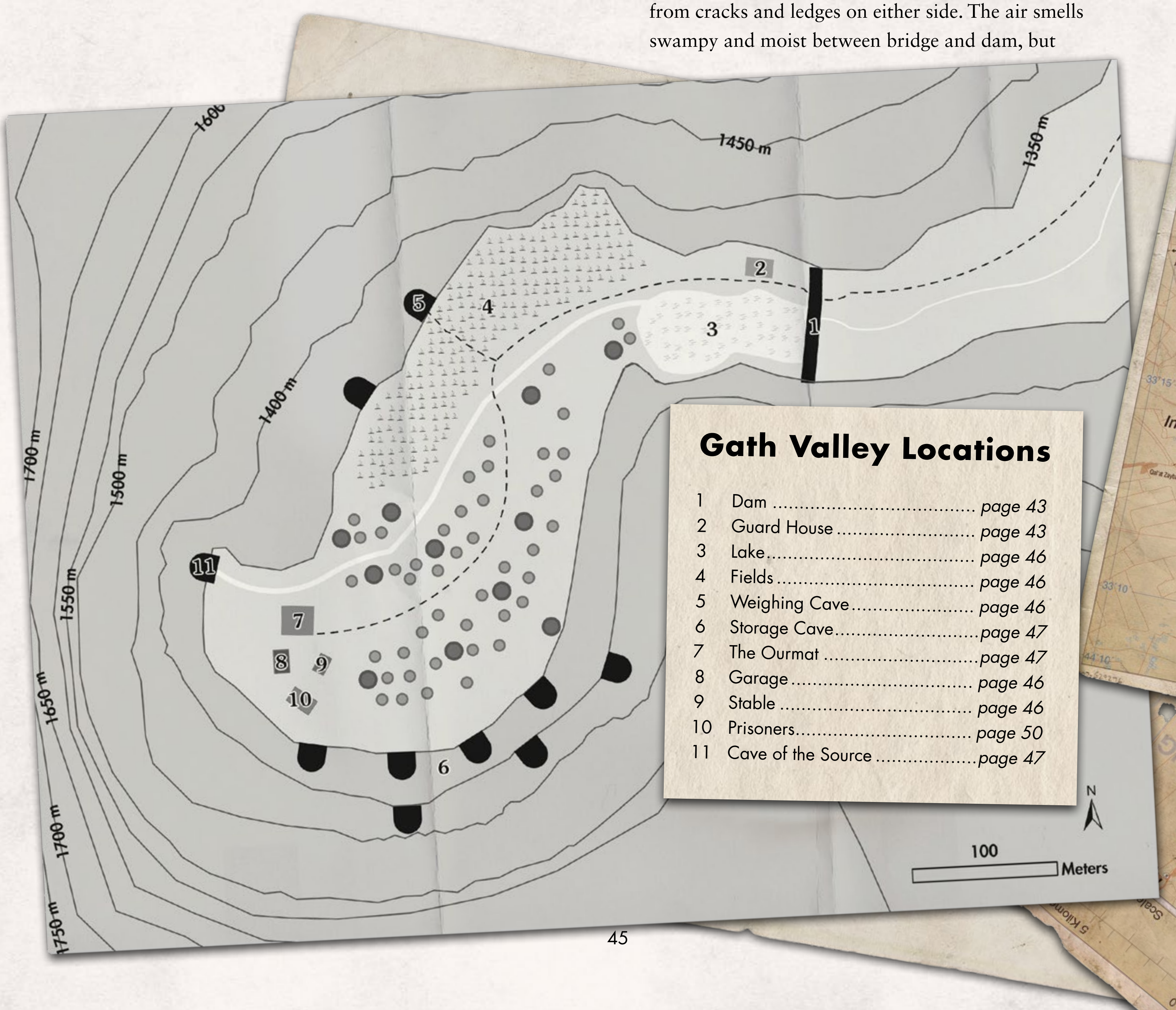
Singapore and revisiting their homeland only through recurring nightmares. The rest might want to stay out of the valley and remain in a country where weight gain is tolerated, but return out of fear. When they initially leave, they are told bad things will happen if they fail to come when called. Those threats are bluffs—the Téuthan cannot survive in our reality more than a few hours at a time, and they can only arrive and exit it via the Ourmat—but few have the guts to find out for sure.

The 562 adults and 221 children in Gath Valley grow crops for subsistence and opium for market. They herd in the hills and fish in their dammed lake. They toil, worship Abidleth, and obey the Ourmat's whims.

Most modern Gaths speak some Pashto in addition to their private tongue. Beyond their lake and stream, there is no running water in the Valley, and its few electrical devices are battery-powered. No Gath recognizes more than 50 words of English.

Gath Valley

Gath Valley is surprisingly green, sheltered, and irrigated. The looming valley walls are mossy on the south and dusty gray to the north. Stubborn pines jut from cracks and ledges on either side. The air smells swampy and moist between bridge and dam, but



Gath Valley Locations

1	Dam	page 43
2	Guard House	page 43
3	Lake	page 46
4	Fields	page 46
5	Weighing Cave	page 46
6	Storage Cave	page 47
7	The Ourmat	page 47
8	Garage	page 46
9	Stable	page 46
10	Prisoners	page 50
11	Cave of the Source	page 47

Language Barriers

There are four languages at play in Gath Valley, and they can provide a lot of interesting frustration to the soldiers when someone who knows what they need can't tell them about it or understand their question.

GATH: Yasir Marwat speaks a bit, but his command is not as great as he thinks.

DARI: About a third of the adult Gaths know some of the national trade language. Marwat and Sutterberg are fluent.

PASHTO: The district's dialect is spoken by about half the adult Gaths (including the Ourmat and anyone set to guard the Americans). It is Yasir Marwat's native language. Sutterberg speaks it like a native. Kryptowicz and Right Stuff speak it a bit.

clears in the village to a refreshing mountain crispness with just a hint of dust. Noises echo off the hard walls of buildings and the soaring enclosing mountains. Between sounds, the silence is hushed, as if the whole settlement is holding its breath, waiting.

To the north of the river and directly west of the dam is a thin, irrigated strip of fields growing wheat and opium poppies. This extends to a footbridge over the stream to the southern section and terminates in the main village. At the lake are a few homes where fishermen live, almost all of them older than the average Gath. In the northern wall of the valley is the Weighing Cave.

The main part of the settlement begins at the bridge. The southern valley holds round homes built of stone and mortar. Interspersed among them are scruffy gardens. There are occasional pomegranate trees, generally unhealthy and suffering from mold. A cave serves as a storage chamber.

At the far side of the village is the largest structure in the valley, a six-meter-tall stone blockhouse, the seat of the Ourmat. A stable holds a dozen horses and mules. A garage holds the Ourmat's vehicles. (She cannot drive, but they are semi-communal, being used or withheld at her whim.) A workshop holds well-used tools and a communal store of fuel. The valley ends at the sacred Cave of the Source, from which the stream emerges.

Entering Gath Valley

At least three Gaths accompany the visitors at all times. At night, they offer sleeping quarters in the Weighing Cave, with its old car backseat being presented as the height of luxury. They say the visitors can see the Ourmat tomorrow, maybe.

By day, they offer the visitors a meal and water in the Weighing Cave and say the Ourmat will decide when to see them. Probably later today, sometime.

Gath food consists of fish and home-made bread, extremely bland and in tiny portions.

Any soldier can make an **INT×5** roll. *Failure:* This is quite different from the region's usual hospitality. *Success:* They are not even making the pretense of being happy hosts. Good manners in Afghanistan require giving guests your best. The Gaths clearly have a different standard.

All in all, you want the soldiers to get the impression of a tiny society, confined from without by violent enemies, and from within by strict social roles and a choking lack of opportunity.

The Lake

The old men who live by the lake are variously admired, despised, and ignored, depending on the mood of the villager you ask. Some consider the men shrewd and learned, enjoying a well-earned rest doing the easy work of fishing for loaches and snowtrouts and inspecting the dam. (Younger men repair it, usually unmarried ones, since it provides a chance to show off physical strength and endurance.)

The old men have numerous *kunkalu* marks (see page 50). It is easier to convince them to talk than most villagers. Anyone who asks the old men about the square scars gets a +20% bonus on their **Persuade** or **CHA×5** test.

The Weighing Cave

This wide cave has been chiseled wider, with crude beams across the ceiling, supported by wooden pillars. The Weighing Cave is the Gath community's answer to the front porch of an old General Store, or the office water cooler. People come here to hang out in the heat of the day, or to warm up in the winter. There are benches and chairs and backseats from junked sedans wreathed in mold and rust. A huge oven rests against one wall, vented to the open by welded-together pieces of truck exhaust pipe. The oven is roaring and pleasantly warm. It usually smells of roasting meat, despite the obvious starvation of the Gaths. They say the meat is not for them, it is for the Ourmat. It is goat, boar, beef, or whatever the Ourmat likes.

The centerpieces of the first chamber are two seesaws, each a long, flat beam with a well-worn seat on one end and a large chunk of granite lashed to a divot in the other. If anyone asks what they are, the Gaths explain they are scales, a man scale and a woman scale. (The Gaths must sit on these once a week to see if they are heavy enough to be bled or cut to make *kunkalu* dumplings, as described on page 49.)

If anyone then asks why they're weighing everyone, the Gaths just look puzzled and say it's for the Ourmat, as if this should be perfectly obvious.

Farther back in the cave is a wooden wall with a door. Through that is the Gath infirmary, a place where nightmares come true.

At first, the infirmary does not seem bad. It is ruled by a cheerful old woman with one leg and eleven teeth. Her name is Kathka. She is described on page 48.

The Storage Cave

The storage cave, the five or six caves branching off it, and the ones going deeper off those are all dank and dimly lit. Any Gath tour guides enjoy this opportunity to show off by cracking one or two chemlights. There are drums of rusty water and others full of molding grain. A dozen Type 56 rifles (the Chinese version of the AK-47) are carefully stored with box after box of ammo, along with an unlocked crate of old Soviet hand grenades. There are boxes of American and Chinese military rations. All of this is packed in deeper, father crevices.

A soldier who explores all this bounty and succeeds at a **Military Science** (**Land**) test gets a disturbing sensation that this valley truly is a roach motel for anyone who wants to invade it. The dam would preclude armor long enough for the tribe to get to cover. The Gaths could wait out any number of artillery barrages in these caves.

Of course, that does not really explain why the Gath all look so malnourished if they have stockpiled so much food.

The Garage

The collected motor vehicles of Gath Valley include one jeep (barely better than a dune buggy), two ordinary light trucks, one "technical" (a light truck with a swiveling machine gun on top), four dirt bikes, and lots of random parts.

The machine gun on the technical is a Russian PK, carefully maintained. The Gaths have about 500 rounds for it, boxed in 25-round belts that may be linked together to form five 100-round belts.

The Seat of the Ourmat

This two-story edifice is decorated—unlike any other place in the village—and armed. The exterior walls have generations of human skulls cemented to them in neat rows. The skulls at the bottom are almost completely collapsed to dust. Towards the top, a few can be seen with modern crowns and fillings in the teeth. The skulls bespeak a variety of ages and sizes. About one in ten has a hole or gash indicating violent demise, while others are intact.

Its flat roof supports an old Soviet DShK ("dishka") heavy machine gun, as well as artfully arranged pieces of wreckage from that Mi-24 Hind chopper. The barrel of an 1880s British Armstrong gun points skyward like an obelisk, its metal body dented and discolored in a curved line. Near the machine gun sits a weathertight wooden box of ammunition.

A battered (unarmed) pickup truck and an ancient dirtbike usually sit outside the seat of the Ourmat for use by her attendants.

When the visitors are allowed inside, see **MEETING THE OURMAT** on page 51.

The Cave of the Source

This is where Abidleth materializes, and where the "marriage" between it and the Ourmat occurs. It is a sacred place. While it has a high, pointed ceiling and goes very deep into the mountain, the cave is only five meters across at its opening, and it rapidly narrows. The walls are covered with a multihued encrustation, dark and thin, like the rainbow sheen of oil but permanent and in layers. (This is caused by unusual chemical reactions caused by Abidleth rotating into our three dimensions.) Luminous spirals arise out of these colors, burning faintly firefly yellow.

If the soldiers go into this cave, half a dozen Gath men come and shout at them to get out. If the soldiers are seen trying to take stones out of the cave, or chipping away at the walls, the Gaths attack no matter how well they were getting along before.

Doom School in Gath Valley

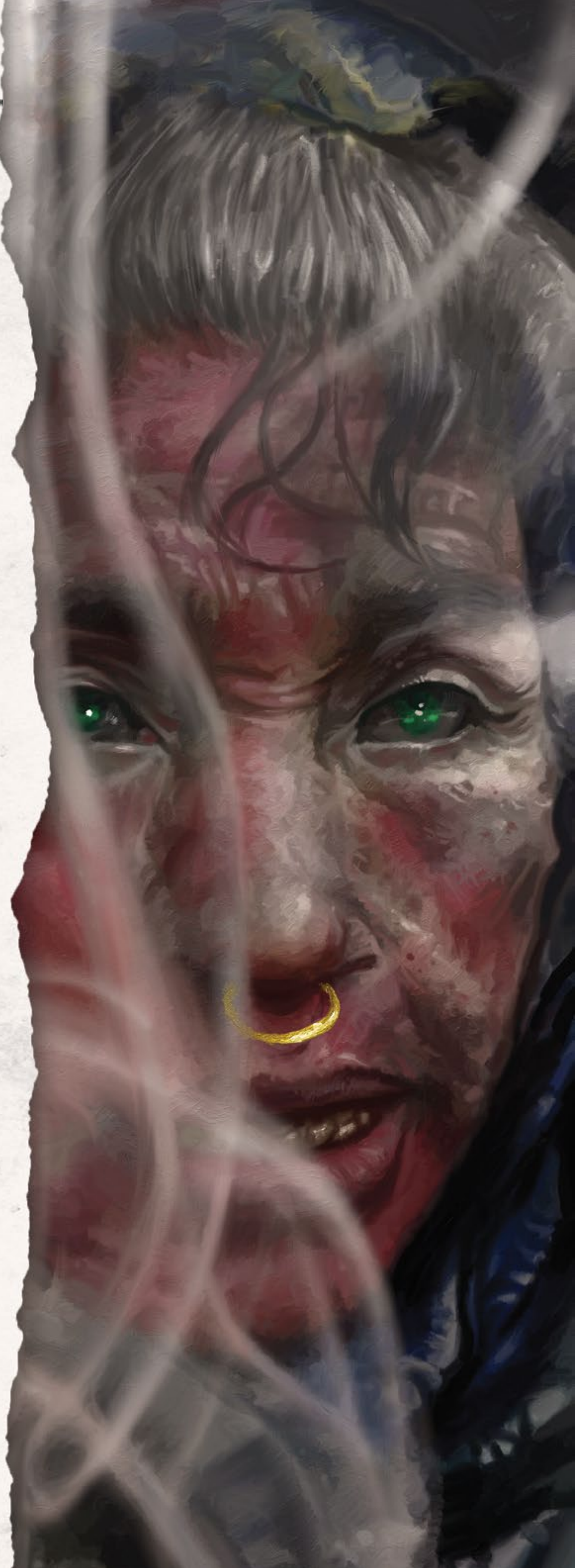
Before being summoned for dinner with the Ourmat (described on page 51), the soldiers have time to interact with the Gaths.

Interviewing Kathka

Kathka oversees the infirmary in the Weighing Cave. Her tools are primitive but she is talented. Her First Aid, Medicine, and Surgery skills are at 50%. She has a drawer full of razor and X-acto blades for detail work, and a pair of Ginsu Nuri cooking knives (one orange, one green) for bigger jobs. She has several jugs of hand sanitizer and ostentatiously rubs it on blades, thread, and needles before cutting or sewing. She also has a small pharmacy, including giant aspirin tablets from Kyrgyzstan, a couple dozen Serbian Z-packs, and plenty of home-grown opium.

Kathka is almost unique among the women of Gath in that she has good color and energy, even the tiniest hint of a developing pot belly.

Kathka is delighted with the visitors. She pinches their muscles and flesh, marveling at their size, possibly even seeming a bit flirtatious. If anyone is injured, Kathka is generous with her opium, offering a pipe and, if it's refused, smoking it herself and then blowing it into the patient's mouth with an eleven-tooth kiss. (This is standard procedure in Gath medicine: Kathka has developed a potent tolerance for the drug.)



Kathka speaks Pashto and is far more willing to talk than the typical Gath. Pace out the revelation of information. If she is the first person they talk to, she should be more reticent. If they have been around, Kathka is more outgoing.

"WHAT ARE THE SEE-SAWS OUT THERE?" *Early:* She explains in a vague manner that the Gaths need to stay little. It is never a problem for her because she lacks a leg. It has been gone since she was young. *Late:* If people get too big in the village, "Snip-snip!" They are drained or a little *kunkalu* (see page 50) patch comes off. She never worries about "weigh day." The stone never moves for her, thanks to her missing leg.

"WHO IS IN CHARGE HERE?" *Early:* The Ourmat rules on behalf of Abidleth. But Abidleth is not going to come back for a year or more. *Late:* The Ourmat bears children for the village. The village does what she says, because only she can speak to Abidleth. The Ourmat eats the most because she suffers the most.

"WHAT IS AN 'OURMAT'?" *Early:* The Ourmat is the "big woman" who rules the Gath and lives in the house with the "dead helicopter." *Late:* The Ourmat is the "big woman" who goes into the Cave of the Source to "lie" with Abidleth. Doing so makes a "Téuthan," a spirit which guards the Gath valley. The Ourmat lives in the house with the "dead helicopter." The people make *kunkalu* dumplings (see page 50) for her so she grows larger.

"DO YOU EAT HUMAN FLESH?" *Early:* She seems confused by this and begins listing meats by type, including fish, goat and bird. *Late:* She says for the visitors not to worry, that they are safe.

A Disturbing Interlude (Day Only)

This scene may occur by day when Hoagie is up and around the town center, as assorted villagers are gawking at the soldiers. A child, maybe five or six years old, points at Hoagie and cries, "Ourmat! Ourmat!" As far as the child is concerned, the only people who get physically large are those who have the favor of Abidleth.

A Gath man deals with this blasphemy by stepping up to the child and delivering a shockingly hard, open-handed smack blow to the ear. It knocks the child, screaming, to the ground with a punctured eardrum.

Gath witnessing this do not seem alarmed. A woman picks up the child, scolding even as she wipes blood from his ear canal. If no one interferes, she takes the child off to Kathka.

There are about twenty Gath men with AK-47s or old Mosin-Nagant rifles watching. If a soldier points a rifle, so do they.

If one of the visitors seems outraged, the man who struck the child apologizes but looks bemused. He is unhappy that he upset the Americans, but insists that the child "spoke what it shouldn't," ignorantly mocking important things.

Asking Questions (Night or Day)

These are some probable questions and the answers the soldiers get with a **Foreign Language** (**Pashto**) roll or help from their translator.

"WHY DOES EVERYONE GET WEIGHED?" *Failure:* The answer is vague. Outsiders don't get weighed. *Success:* The Gath responds that anyone who grows too big has given the tribe too little. The excess is taken and offered in sacrifice to the Ourmat, Abidleth, and the Téuthan to keep the Gath safe from their enemies.

"HOW DO YOU STAY FREE OF THE TALIBAN?" *Failure:* Another vague answer, to the effect that the enemies of the Gath face the Téuthan. This is usually followed with an almost ritualistic waving of the Gath's arms above their head. *Success:* The Téuthan is some kind of spirit or beast that protects the Gath people.

"WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE OURMAT?" *Failure:* The Ourmat is a community high priestess and leader. *Success:* Every eight and a half years, a new Ourmat ritually marries Abidleth and becomes mother to a Téuthan. If she dies, the old Ourmat resumes her duties. If the new Ourmat survives, the old Ourmat ascends to the heavens.

"WHAT IS A TÉUTHAN?" *Failure:* The Gath makes a whistling noise and waves their arms about their head. *Success:* The Téuthan is the child of the Ourmat and Abidleth. It protects the Gath people.

"WHO IS ABIDLETH?" *Failure:* The Sky-Howler. The Gath points all about the sky as if that explains everything. *Success:* Abidleth is their immortal patron and guardian, what they call the "sky-howler." Describing Abidleth to outsiders is blasphemous.

"WHAT ARE THE SQUARE SCARS ON PEOPLE'S ARMS AND THIGHS?" *Failure:* If someone becomes too big, they are cut. *Success:* The marks are for when Gath do not give enough to the tribe. What is owed is removed and offered in sacrifice as *kunkalu* to the Ourmat, Abidleth, and the Téuthan to keep the Gath safe from their enemies.

"WHAT IS KUNKALU?" *Failure:* The most sacred food of the Ourmat. *Success:* Toasted wheat dumplings and pudding, mixed with meat and blood. It is forbidden to serve *kunkalu* to anyone but an Ourmat.

"HUMAN MEAT AND BLOOD?" It is ceremonial. The Ourmat can explain.

Guarding the Vehicles

Four or five curious young men with rifles join any soldiers stationed at the vehicles. The leader of these youths is named Malagaeg. He speaks Pashto. He wants to know all about the M-ATVs and their weapons, and anything else the soldiers have that does violence. He hopes that these are gifts for the Gaths, and is disappointed if the soldiers indicate that they will take them when they go. Friendly soldiers who can breach the language barrier or who sprinkle their conversation with stories involving violence get a +20% bonus thereafter on social rolls with Malagaeg and his posse.

After a half hour or so, Malagaeg volunteers to watch the vehicles for the soldiers. If the soldiers demur, he sends a couple of his buddies back to get an empty 50-gallon drum and firewood. He soon has a fire burning merrily and offers cigarettes to the soldiers from a crumpled pack. He offers to share opium tar and a pipe.

One word that both groups certainly have in common is "Taliban," which makes Malagaeg eagerly make derisive noises and gestures. He vigorously mimes excising biceps and thighs, then cooking and eating them. His friends all chime in with disputations about the best parts (buttocks, cheeks, sweetbreads).

If circumstances warrant, Malagaeg might show off the *kunkalu* scars on his left bicep and left calf, possibly after commenting on the size of Hoagie or Chuckles.

Getting Laid

If it's how they roll, a soldier can pick out one of the underfed, sullen Gath ladies and make a **Persuade** or **CHA×5** test. *Failure:* She goes over to her father or her husband and talks with him in low, mumbling tones. He comes over and gestures at a piece of soldier gear: a combat knife, a cell phone, his night vision monocle (strictly against regulations!), or his CamelBak. It's a straight-up trade. *Success:* She talks with her husband or father, then grudgingly comes over and nods, having been told to go along with it as a gesture of goodwill. How Kryptowicz deals with this breakdown in discipline is up to his player.

Interrogating Prisoners

Two captured Taliban fighters are being held in a sturdy stone room next to the goat pen and the butcher's home, quite near the Seat of the Ourmat. The Gaths do not object to the soldiers talking to the prisoners. They seem quite proud of them. If the soldiers try to free a prisoner, that means a fight with the village.

Each line of questioning requires a **Foreign Language (Pashto)** roll to get a prisoner to talk using bluster, cajoling, or promises.

"HOW DID YOU GET HERE?" *Failure:* The prisoner calls the serviceman a hind part of a goat. *Success:* We stopped them trying to steal a girl from a village. She escaped. They captured us instead.

"WHAT'S YOUR COMPLAINT WITH THE GATHS?" *Failure:* The Gaths steal wives and eat men. They consort with devils. The Gath are not human. *Success:* As with a failure, and the prisoner says that only an idiot would not know the horrors the Gaths have inflicted on their neighbors since antiquity. The Gaths are sorcerers. Gath women are "whores to Shaitain." They produce monstrous offspring, devil children that can fly. The only thing that can protect against the monstrous offspring is the devil-blocking song which is taught to all righteous folk in this region.

"DEVIL CHILDREN? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?" *Failure:* Wisdom means nothing to an unbeliever like you. *Success:* When the leader of the Gath sings, the child of Shaitan appears. The only thing which can protect against the monstrous offspring is the devil-blocking song which is taught to all righteous folk in this region.

"WILL YOU TEACH US THE DEVIL-BLOCKING SONG?" *Failure:* No. *Success:* The prisoner, growing terrified, asks the soldiers to remember him when the Gath turn on them. He then sings the song, softly and with great care. See **LEARNING THE DEVIL-BLOCKING HYMN** below.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE GATHS?" *Failure:* Sputtering curses involving debased sex acts. *Success:* The Gath are the most evil force in Afghanistan. American money, food, and aid will cause them to spread out of their valley. The prisoner would rather face an invasion of 100 American armies.

Fleeing Without Meeting the Ourmat

If the apparent cannibalism in Gath culture is enough to persuade the team to call this mission a failure and head home, a few Gath guards intercept them. They say that the Ourmat wishes to speak with them. That is a polite way of saying the Ourmat commands them to come to her. If the visitors refuse, the guards become wide-eyed in shock and outrage. They say the Ourmat has spoken. No one in Gath Valley refuses a wish of the Ourmat. The visitors must come. It will become a battle with Gath Valley if they try to force their way out. See **GETTING OUT** on page 55.

Meeting the Ourmat

The last element of the soldiers' diplomatic visit to Gath Valley should be an evening meeting with the Ourmat herself. How many of the soldiers go into the meeting is up to the players.

Learning the Devil-Blocking Hymn

This eerie melody does not sound like a typical battle chant or hymn, nor like the religious songs in mosques, nor like Turkish or Indian pop music. The language is nothing the soldiers, Sutterberg, or Marwat have heard before. The words, in fact, are nonsense. The melody and rhythms are what really matter.

To memorize the ritual, a would-be operator must fail a Sanity test, losing 1D4 **SAN** from the unnatural. If the attempt fails—the operator succeeds at the Sanity test—the operator loses 1 **SAN**. An operator who has a musical **Art** skill may take the **Art** skill's rating as a penalty to the Sanity test when trying to learn the song. (*Example:* Rambam has **SAN** 65 and **Art (Rap)** 40%. Rambam may take a −40% penalty to his Sanity test when trying to learn the Devil-Blocking Song, failing the test and learning the ritual with a roll of 26 or higher.)

Activating the ritual requires an Activation Roll. The chance equals 99 minus the operator's current **SAN**. If that fails, the operator loses 1 **SAN** but the ritual has no effect; or the operator may spend 1 **POW**, permanently, to activate it despite the recoiling objections of his or her brain.

Devil-Blocking Hymn

Simple ritual. Study time: *minutes;* 1D4 SAN. Activation: *a turn;* 2 WP, 1D4 SAN.

After this ritual is activated, no Téuthan can come within 10 meters of the operator for 1D4 turns, and must flee at least 10 meters away if already nearer. Then the ritual must be activated again. Gaths attack anyone who attempts it, as do Téuthan should it fail. Whether the ritual functions against other entities (and what it does to them) is entirely up to the Handler.

Sutterberg has the sense that to the Gaths, the Ourmat seems to be equivalent to the Pope or the Queen of England. The soldiers must be respectful. If the Ourmat asks a soldier anything, their answer should brief and clear.

Before entering, the soldiers must leave their firearms and grenades outside. The Gaths do not object to knives. The Ourmat's attendants of course remain armed.

Inside the House

Inside, a high-ceilinged chamber is held up by posts that are carved with surprised, amazed, or angry faces. The interior walls are covered with spirals, waves, and geometric designs picked out in spent shell casings, all polished to a high, brassy gleam. A variety of calibers are on display, bespeaking decades of firearm discharges. The floor is swathed in carpets and giant cushions.

Behind the reception hall is a bedroom and a chamber where the Ourmat's attendants bathe and feed her, a kitchen with a large, wood-fire oven that is always hot, and a simple ladder to the roof.

After a few minutes, attendants wheel the Ourmat out on a gleaming carriage.

The Ourmat

The Ourmat is in her mid-twenties, about 170 cm tall and morbidly obese, pushing 135 kg. She cannot walk more than a few steps unassisted. Her round, cherubic face is unlined. She has pierced ears, decorated with long, day-glo plastic bangles. A gold chain from India stretches from left ear to pierced nostril, dangling a few 9 mm shell casings. Her voluminous clothes are elaborately woven in the sorts of abstract designs that make Afghan rugs famous.

By far the most compelling aspect of her appearance is the stain on her skin and hair. Most Gaths have dark tan complexions. But the tops of her cheeks, her forehead, ears, knuckles, and the tip of her chin are all marked with blackish rainbow swirls. A little over half of her long hair is white. The hair that has grown back its original black is hard to see beneath an elaborate hairdo held in place with long, beaded wooden pins. The strange colorations are marks of the radiance of Abidleth, three years ago.

CARRIAGE: Four attendants wheel the Ourmat about on a padded carriage made of spare auto and dirtbike parts, about one meter by two meters. It has a metal plate foundation and wheel on each corner. The spokes of the wheels are threaded with bells, rings, and beads, so that she moves in a discordant rattle. The sides of her carriage are decorated with flakes and strips of the dark, rainbow-stained matter found in the Cave of the Source (page 47), lacquered in place. The Ourmat's pillows are cased with Afghan rugs of exceptional quality.

TREATS: Resting in a frame by her right hand is an immaculately maintained M4 carbine, unloaded. A tray by her left hand holds cakes, dried figs, goat cheese, bread, a large brass bowl of pomegranate seeds, two prominently displayed packages of Japanese Pocky candy, an unopened package of Oreo cookies, and a small, elegant plate holding three *kunkalu* dumplings.

What the Ourmat Says

When the Americans enter, the Ourmat babbles at them in Gath for a bit, translated by Marwat, or from Gath to Pashto by a Gath.

The Ourmat praises the power and size of the warriors of America. Together, she claims, the Gaths and Americans will certainly destroy the Taliban.

She then reaches for the M4. If the soldiers attack or do anything stupid, remember that her four attendants are there, fully armed. Otherwise, she holds the M4 out to Sutterberg, whom she assumes to be the leader. The Ourmat says that she is returning this weapon that was stolen from America by the Taliban, and that the Americans may now thank her for doing so.

She waits expectantly. No matter what the soldiers or Sutterberg say in English, Marwat or the Gaths translate it as profuse gratitude, which makes her smile.

Her teeth are in great condition.

The Ourmat's Questions

She then has several questions to ask the soldiers. The answers do not matter much, except to provoke disquiet or make them nervous that they have said the wrong thing.

TRANSLATOR: "Do you in America obey great gods in the sky?"

If they say anything about obeying only one God, she is very pleased and says the Gath, too, have a special relationship with a deity.

TRANSLATOR: "If Americans come, will they want to take our lands and food? Or will we be left alone to do as we see fit?"

Whoever answers gets a shrewd, evaluating look out of her. The Ourmat wants an alliance with America, but she does not want that to interfere with Gath customs, no matter how strange they may seem.

TRANSLATOR: "Will you share food with me to seal our friendship?"

As soon as she says this, have the soldiers make **HUMINT** rolls. Each who fails notices that the four attendants look surprised. Each who succeeds also picks up envy.

Marwat and Sutterberg think it would be offensive to refuse. If they agree, the Ourmat smiles, claps, and summons an attendant who brings a tray with a lancet, a handful of cups, and bandages. The attendant offers to draw blood from the visitors. If they ask an explanation, the attendant says that he will take their blood to Kathka for ritual preparation of *kunkalu,* the sacred dumplings. If the soldiers seem surprised, the Ourmat says Kathka requires only a small amount of blood, not enough to harm them. It is a ritual necessity.

If any player character goes along with it, the bloodletting inflicts one point of damage. The attendant takes it to the kitchen, mixes it with flour, and fries it up.

It is expected that participant take their dumplings and offer one to the Ourmat. She graciously accepts and eats it, says through the translator how strong their blood is, and offers the rest back to them. That costs 0/1 **SAN** from helplessness or 1/1D4 for any who partakes.

If the visitors decline to be bled and share kunlaku with the Ourmat, she and her attendants become insulted. See **IF THE SOLDIERS CHILL IT OUT** on page 55.

TRANSLATOR: "We are preparing a feast for you and it will soon be ready. In the meantime, do you have any questions for me?"

The Ourmat's Answers

She answers freely, or as freely as she can across the language barrier. Possible topics include:

"WHY ARE YOU EATING OUR BLOOD IN LITTLE PASTRIES?" Their strength will flow from her to the village, and more importantly to the children of Abidleth the Sky-Howler.

"WHAT IS A SKY-HOWLER?" Sky-howlers protect and instruct people. The sky-howler of the Gath is called Abidleth, but he can only come for a single night every 101 months.

"IS ABIDLETH A GOD?" Of a sort. There is a nameless, indifferent creator at the core of the cosmos. The sky-howlers, among many others, pay homage to it. Abidleth has forbidden the Gaths to meddle in the affairs of the creator.

"WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ABIDLETH COMES?" When Abidleth comes, he marries a new Ourmat and impregnates her with a new Téuthan to protect the Gath. The old Ourmat ascends to heaven.

"WHAT IS A TÉUTHAN?" A child of Abidleth.

"CAN WE SEE A TÉUTHAN?" The Ourmat shakes her head somberly. Bringing forth the "children" is difficult and painful, and is only done in time of great danger. If the Americans fight by the side of the Gaths, they will see one soon.

The Feast

The food arrives. It is served on beaten copper platters with wooden handles, and it is clearly the arms, legs, ribs and heads of a Taliban prisoner that has been cooking for hours. Her attendants stare and salivate.

TRANSLATOR: "Eat, and bring our peoples together."

Each non-Gath loses 1/1D4 **SAN** from helplessness.

If Marwat is a non-player character, he vomits right onto the Ourmat's cart.

Unless the soldiers smooth things over with a successful **Persuade** test, the Ourmat and her attendants slowly go from being perplexed to outraged.

Reactions

How the soldiers leave Gath Valley depends on their reaction to the feast.

If the Soldiers Attack

The soldiers might attack the Ourmat right at the feast, either with knives, bare hands, or concealed weapons, or after rushing out to get their rifles. A light truck and a motorcycle are parked outside, within sight of 1D4 armed Gaths. It takes one turn for a soldier to get to one of them and another to attempt to start it with a **Drive** test. (On a fumble, the vehicle stalls and cannot be started until repaired.) At the end of each turn, a player must make a **Luck** roll or 1D4 new Gaths join the attack on the soldiers.

If the Ourmat dies, the youngest Téuthan emerges from some space coterminous with her and starts consuming soldiers. The villagers retreat once the Téuthan is engaged.

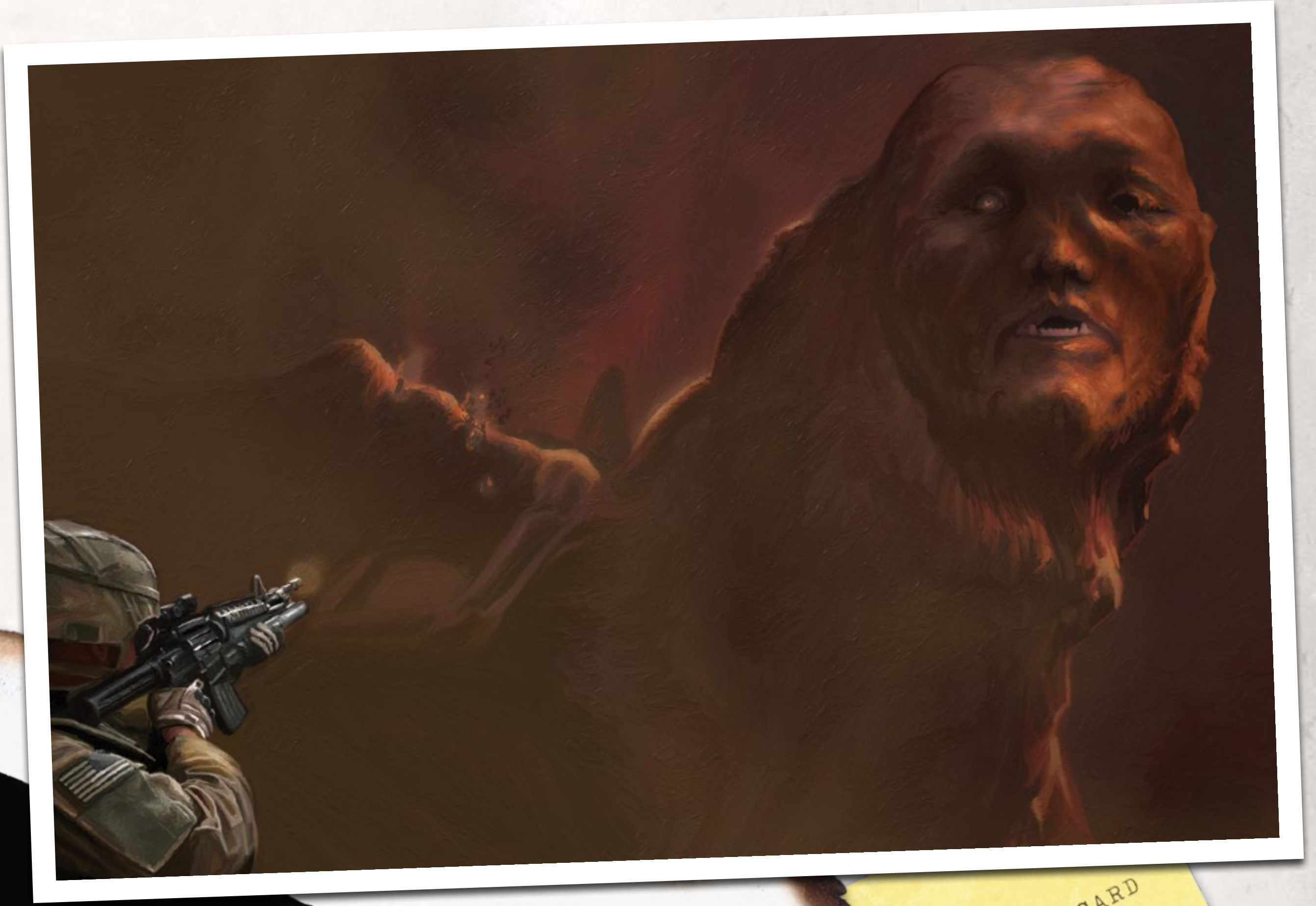
TURN 1: The attendants take a turn to tip over the Ourmat's cart (its metal base has Armor 5).

TURN 2: The attendants take cover behind the Ourmat's cart and shield her with their bodies while they shoot at the soldiers. Three Gaths outside seize the soldiers' unattended firearms, unless other soldiers have them. The Ourmat starts a shrill, whistling chant.

TURN 3: Three Gaths outside rush in to attack the soldiers with their own weapons. Others outside take up weapons. Still others run to the caves for shelter.

TURN 4: Four Gaths outside use machine guns to attack any soldiers in sight.

TURN 6: Unless it has already emerged, the youngest Téuthan emerges from some space coterminous with the Ourmat, doing her no harm. It flies across the valley, takes a minute to destroy Fire Team Bravo, and then comes back for Fire Team Alpha.



YELLOW CARD

If the Soldiers Chill It Out

If the soldiers do not attack but fail to smooth things over with **Persuade,** the Ourmat yells and points at the door. For emphasis, one attendant lowers his rifle and signals for them to depart. Soldiers who fail to take the hint can have a fight, as described above. So do soldiers who try to steal a dirt bike or truck.

Those who withdraw find a crowd of Gaths gathering. The Gaths do not attack. The soldiers can simply start walking, with a crowd of silent, armed Gaths shadowing them.

After one minute (probably while the soldiers continue to move; see **GETTING OUT** on page 55), the soldiers hear a weird, shrieking song behind them. The Gaths start to chuckle. The women, children and old men turn around and leave. The bloodthirsty young men stick around to see the carnage.

One minute later, the oldest Téuthan emerges from some space coterminous with the Ourmat, doing her no harm. It darts across the valley and takes a minute to destroy Fire Team Bravo.

Then it comes back for Fire Team Alpha. The villagers retreat once the Téuthan is engaged.

If the Soldiers Join the Feast

The soldiers could take a deep breath, eat enough human flesh to be polite, and shake hands on the deal before trying to get the hell out of there. Each who partakes loses 1D6+1 **SAN** from helplessness. The soldiers can walk out of the hall with the Ourmat's blessing. The Gaths cheer and fire a few shots in the air.

The Ourmat starts a shrill, whistling chant. What she said earlier, about summoning the Téuthan being so painful, was a lie. The Gaths look happy. They congratulate the soldiers for winning a great honor.

The oldest Téuthan emerges from some space coterminous with the Ourmat, doing her no harm. It slithers through the air around the soldiers. If they attack it or the Gaths, it begins eating them. Otherwise, it flies across the valley, takes a minute to destroy Fire Team Bravo, and lets Fire Team Alpha go in peace.

Getting Out

The path from the Seat of the Ourmat to the M-ATVs outside the dam covers about 300 meters. Unless the soldiers participated in the feast willingly, resolve their escape one minute at a time.

- **MINUTE 1:** The Ourmat summons the youngest Téuthan. The soldiers may move unhindered.
- **MINUTE 2:** The Téuthan attacks.
- **MINUTE 3:** Assuming the soldiers escape the Téuthan, the Gaths attack.
- **MINUTE 4:** The Gaths withdraw as the Téuthan attacks again. If the soldiers destroyed the Téuthan, the Gaths attack while the Ourmat summons another.
- And so on.

Movement

The soldiers can move 50 meters per minute as a team: part of the team provides suppressing fire while the other part maneuvers to cover. If their leader succeeds at a **Military Science** (**Land**) test, they move 100 meters. An individual soldier can move 100 meters by abandoning the team. That is very dangerous when the Gaths attack, described under **THREATS**, below.

DRIVING: Soldiers in a Gath truck can move 100 meters per minute through the uneven terrain of the village and fields. If the driver succeeds at a **Drive** test, it moves 200 meters.

FIRST AID: Attempting a **First Aid** test takes one minute without moving. Attempting it in a moving truck incurs a –20% penalty.

Threats

TÉUTHAN: When a Téuthan attacks the players' soldiers, resolve that combat turn by turn until the Téuthan kills a soldier or is destroyed. Each turn, the Téuthan swats a random soldier, or bites if the soldier is prone. If the Téuthan hits a truck, the driver must make a **Drive** test (or **Heavy Machinery** at +20% if it's an M-ATV) or the vehicle rolls over or crashes. Each soldier in a pickup takes 2D6 damage in a wreck; soldiers in an M-ATV take no damage from rolling over.

No Téuthan pursues the soldiers for more than three turns after they leave the valley. If the Téuthan kills a soldier, the soldiers can move the following minute suffering no attacks as the Téuthan devours the fallen soldier. If they counterattack, play it out turn by turn.

GATHS ATTACK: If the soldiers destroy a Téuthan, they go without being attacked for the next minute.

At the beginning of the minute after that, they come under fire by the Gaths, howling in outrage, while the Ourmat's sings her keening song.

At the beginning of the minute after that, another Téuthan rises from around the Ourmat and flies at the soldiers, and the Gaths stop firing.

The Gath fire is terribly inaccurate but the volume of fire is huge. At any given moment, dozens of furious Gaths are firing at the soldiers. During each minute under fire by the Gaths, each player character (including Sutterberg with her lack of combat skills) must make a skill test to respond to threats. Roll 1D10 to determine which skill is required. A character moving alone, having abandoned the team, automatically fails at each test. *Failure (or if the character lacks the skill or cannot use it):* the team takes one hit at the end of that minute, or two hits for a fumble. *Success:* the team does not take a hit. *Critical success:* prevents one hit from another roll's failure. Whatever the result, have each player describe their skill use.

Each hit inflicts damage to a random member of the soldiers' party. The first 12 such hits are listed in the **GATH ATTACKS** table. If more attacks are needed, pick one from that table or roll for it with 1D12.

Work with the players to describe these threats and the characters' reactions, using the terrain and features of Gath Valley. Heighten the tension, confusion, and fear at every chance.

ATTACKING THE OURMAT: Hitting the Seat of the Ourmat with grenades requires a **Heavy Weapons** test for a grenade launcher or **Athletics** tests for thrown grenades. Each success inflicts damage equal to its Lethality rating. Inflicting 30 points or more damages the house badly and wounds the Ourmat; inflicting 40 points or more destroys the house and kills the Ourmat. If the soldiers attack the Ourmat's house, they are attacked by the Gaths every minute, whatever else happens. In that case, in each turn of combat with a Téuthan, a random soldier must choose whether to make a skill test to fend off the Gaths or attack the Téuthan. Failure to fend off the Gaths means a random character suffers a hit.

Sanity Reminders

For the player characters, remember the **SAN** costs due to violence that come with deadly combat (0/1D4 for being wounded, the first time it happens in this combat), resisting suppression by heavy fire (1 unless adapted to violence), and the gruesome deaths of characters with whom they have Bonds (1/1D8, the first time it happens in this combat).

>> Fending Off Attacks

On Foot

1D10	Skill
(1–2)	**Alertness**
(3–4)	**Athletics**
(5–6)	**Dodge**
(7–8)	**Firearms** (uses 30 rounds of ammo) or **Heavy Weapons** (uses 100 rounds or 2D4 grenades)
(9–10)	**Military Science (Land)**

Driving

1D10	Skill
(1–2)	**Alertness**
(3–4)	**Drive** (or a **Luck** roll if a passenger)
(5–6)	**Drive** (or a **Luck** roll if a passenger)
(7–8)	**Drive** (if a passenger: **Firearms** [uses 30 rounds of ammo] or **Heavy Weapons** [uses 100 rounds or 2D4 grenades])
(9–10)	**Military Science (Land)**

>> Gath Attacks

Hit	Weapon and Damage
1st	*Machine gun burst:* 7 damage, Armor Piercing 3. (If all technicals, [armed pickup trucks] have been disabled, this hit does not occur.)
2nd	*Heavy machine gun burst:* 13 damage, Armor Piercing 5. (If the target is not in sight of the Ourmat's house, this hit does not occur.)
3rd	*Sniper bullet:* 10 damage, Armor Piercing 3.
4th	*AK-47 burst:* 12 damage, Armor Piercing 3.
5th	*Sniper bullet:* 7 damage, Armor Piercing 3.
6th	*Heavy machine gun:* 10 damage, Armor Piercing 5. (If the target is not in sight of the Ourmat's house, this hit does not occur.)
7th	*RPG-7:* The driver can attempt a **Drive** test to avoid the rocket; if that fails, the truck is destroyed and the driver and each passenger must roll for 30% Lethality. (If the soldiers are not in a vehicle, this hit does not occur.)
8th	*Machine gun burst:* 9 damage, Armor Piercing 3. (If all technicals [armed pickup trucks] have been disabled, this hit does not occur.)
9th	*RPG-7 (only if driving):* The driver can also attempt a **Drive** test to avoid the rocket; if that fails, the truck is destroyed and the driver and each passenger must roll for 30% Lethality. (If the soldiers are not in a vehicle, this hit does not occur.)
10th	*AK-47 bullet:* 7 damage, Armor Piercing 3.
11th	*AK-47 burst:* 7 damage, Armor Piercing 3.
12th	*AK-47 bullet:* 5 damage, Armor Piercing 3.

Debrief and Dénouement

Who (if anyone) lived? What happens to them?

Debrief

If soldiers get out under their own power, they make it safely back to the outpost. Lieutenant Nagel is shocked and appalled at what happened. In a security debriefing, a woman in civilian clothes named Coretta Twain interviews one of the survivors. If the survivor told people about the Téuthan, Coretta suggests that it sounds insane but, if it is the truth, it clearly is a drastic security concern.

If the character did not tell anyone about the Téuthan, she picks very carefully at the weak points in the story, getting quite aggressive. Then she abruptly stops and shows the character a photograph. The photo depicts a soldier standing next to a severed human arm that has to be at least two meters long. It is damaged and slightly rotting, but not transparent like the Téuthan arms were.

Twain says that, of course, the existence of such things is a tightly controlled secret. Strictly need-to-know. If the character wants out, all they need do is take a medical discharge and never talk about Gath Valley or its inhabitants ever again.

But if the character wants to know more, there is much more work on this…problem…to accomplish. A group in the government is responsible for dealing with this kind of threat. Is the character interested in knowing more?

If the soldiers left Gath Valley on their own power after making alliance with the Gaths and the Téuthan, adjust the debriefing accordingly. **Persuade** tests are probably necessary to keep that secret. If any fails, all of the soldiers (and no one else) wind up on a patrol where a drone strike "mistakenly" rains Hellfire missiles on their position. Sutterberg and Marwat die in a roadside ambush.

About a week after the soldiers return to base, the ground shakes and the night flares with an immense explosion only a few kilometers away: a long-range cruise missile has struck Gath Valley, obliterating the village.

It never makes the news.

I Die, You Die, the Girl Dies…

If all the player characters died, let the players briefly take the roles of a group of drone pilots on a base in New Mexico. They do not need names. They are discussing matters as BLUEBIRD LEADER and BLUEBIRD 1 through 5.

BLUEBIRD LEADER has been watching this valley with lousy weather for a week, trying to get a good opportunity for surveillance. Today's the day. BLUEBIRD LEADER's commanding officer says to "obey without question" the orders from "Colonel Dass."

Describe for BLUEBIRD LEADER something the player recognizes as Gath Valley, in the aftermath of the failed Doom School mission. Was the dam burst? It's being rebuilt, with weird gunky stuff under the water. Almost like a giant skeleton, but it crumbles as tribesmen carry logs near it. Did houses blow up? Describe them trying to repair the damage.

Colonel Dass wants BLUEBIRD LEADER to watch a strange building with swirls and parts of an old attack chopper on top, but to stay ludicrously far back. BLUEBIRD LEADER can tell the ancient gun on top of it is no threat to the drone. Maybe Dass doesn't know what he's doing?

The other four BLUEBIRD drones are usually scattered all over Afghanistan, doing surveillance and the occasional Hellfire strike, but at Dass' command they are all massing above the clouds near this unnamed valley.

Colonel Dass gets excited when four men start wheeling a cart towards the building. There's something on it that looks like a large, wounded animal draped in canvas. They are taking it out of a cave to the east, the cave where the stream comes from.

When that cart goes in the building with the chopper chunks, Dass orders all BLUEBIRD drones make an immediate attack run, launching all weapons at that building.

This is strange for many reasons. One, it should not take more than two Hellfire missiles at most to collapse that building, even if it is reinforced. Two, the area is nowhere near clear. There are a lot of people inside the shock zone, including noncombatants and children. Any resistance is met with sharp command. Anyone who refuses to fire or argues about legality is warned of dire professional consequences. Dass barks, "I take full responsibility, damnit!"

Each BLUEBIRD operator can attempt a **Pilot (Drone)** test with 50% skill, plus a +20% bonus from precision targeting, to put a Hellfire on target. If at least one drone strikes the building, they hear Dass say, "This is Colonel Kit Dass, activating Operation FERAL ECLIPSE. Deploy the package. Repeat, deploy FERAL ECLIPSE." If none hit, or if all refuse the clearly illegal order, Dass curses angrily. They hear him call in the mission with coordinates instead.

All BLUEBIRD drones are sent to distant observation positions and watch as a cruise missile, dropping with a nearly vertical arc, plunges into the valley and detonates. It is clearly some form of incendiary, causing a massive fireball that burns for nearly a minute. The BLUBIRD pilots know that the purpose of this sort of munition is to suck all the oxygen out of an area, burning it up so that anyone who is in cover still smothers. Survivors are unlikely. The drone strikes probably killed dozens. That warhead killed hundreds.

It never makes the news.

Characters

Gaths

The scrawny, malnourished, inbred Gaths are not individually fearsome combatants, but there are a lot of them—and thanks to centuries of unnatural influence, they are no longer strictly human. Occasionally (when you decides it's not unsporting) they get in a blood frenzy, chew through their own lips and cheeks in rage, always succeed at CON tests, and fight to the death. Their strongest warriors attend and guard the Ourmat or keep the best firearms.

Gath Tribesman

STR 9 **CON** 8 **DEX** 11 **INT** 10 **POW** 9 **CHA** 8

HP 9 **WP** 9 **SAN** 0

SKILLS: Athletics 40%, Dodge 40%, Firearms 25%, Heavy Weapons 20%, Melee Weapons 40%, Unarmed Combat 50%.

ATTACKS: AK-47 assault rifle 25%, damage 1D12+1 (or Lethality 10%), Armor Piercing 3

Soviet DShK heavy machine gun 20%, Lethality 20%, Armor Piercing 5.

Russian PK machine gun 20%, Lethality 15%, Armor Piercing 3.

RPG-7 20% (+20% for the blast), Lethality 30%, Armor Piercing 5.

Knife 40%, damage 1D4, Armor Piercing 3.

Unarmed 50%, damage 1D4−1.

NOTES: The village has a dozen RPG-7 launchers and a total of five rockets. They are very sparing with them. The DShK machine gun is atop the Ourmat's house.

The PK machine guns are mounted on two technicals (armed pickup trucks).

Gath Sniper or Ourmat's Attendant

STR 10 **CON** 10 **DEX** 13 **INT** 10 **POW** 14 **CHA** 10

HP 10 **WP** 14 **SAN** 0

SKILLS: Firearms 45%, Heavy Weapons 35%, Melee Weapons 50%, Unarmed Combat 60%.

ATTACKS: AK-47 assault rifle 45%, damage 1D12+1 (or Lethality 10%), Armor Piercing 3.

Mosin-Nagant sniper rifle 45%, damage 1D12+2, Armor Piercing 3.

Machete 50%, damage 1D8.

Téuthan

Téuthan are grotesque genetic blends of human DNA and unnatural life-codes etched in exotic matter not native to our dimension. They are not very smart and they are sterile, but they are extremely dangerous.

Téuthan have long, thin torsos, six to eight meters long and one meter wide. Their flesh is mostly transparent, though suspended within it one can see bones, orange veins, and differently-shaded organs in varying degrees of opacity. Their hairless heads are their most human feature. Their foreheads slope drastically, like australopithecines or some microcephalics, and they have pronounced overbites with fist-sized teeth.

Like their faces, their arms (three or four meters long, including hands) are disturbingly human in shape, despite their clear flesh. Far less manlike is the crest that rises from their backs, just behind the shoulders, a half-crescent horizontal fan that resembles a hang glider. The torso ends in a broad fan and has, where one would expect hind legs, two long, powerful, bony fins. The Téuthan on the ground is clumsy but powerful, dragging itself by its forelegs, with its tail and fins flopping behind. But once it leaps to the air, it moves with liquid grace and terrifying speed. Exactly how swiftly one moves is up to you, but it should not take more than a couple of turns to reach victims anywhere in Gath Valley.

When they are needed, the Ourmat summons them with a shrill, whistling song, and they appear from somewhere coterminous with her body. No outsiders have survived seeing the process. The Gath sometimes say the Téuthan "emerges from under her skirts," a typically superstitious and sexualized description of a dimensional transaction that no one on Earth understands. Seeing one being summoned by the Ourmat, with space bubbling and squeaking as it arrives, is as mind-shatteringly terrifying encountering the Téuthan itself.

Three Téuthan inhabit the Ourmat. They do not have names but are slightly different.

YOUNGEST: The youngest is the smallest and has the smoothest skin, judging by the shine on its reflective surface.

OLDEST: The oldest has many scars and is missing several teeth and its right eye. The oldest Téuthan has STR 45, CON 45, and HP 45.

LARGEST: The largest is fatter and two fingers on its left hand will not straighten all the way. When it flies, it tends to dip or lurch a little to the left. The largest Téuthan has STR 55, CON 55, and HP 55.

Téuthan

STR 40 **CON** 40 **DEX** 5 **INT** 7 **POW** 10 **CHA** 4

HP 40 **WP** 10

ARMOR: 5 points of thick, slippery, unnatural flesh.

SKILLS: Flight 60%.

ATTACKS: Swat 70%, damage 3D6 (and see SWAT).

Feed 40%, Lethality 30%, Armor Piercing 5 (see **FEED**).

AIRBORNE: When flying, the Téuthan has DEX 15.

FEED: The Téuthan only feeds on a prone victim, gaining a +20% bonus to hit. At the end of each turn after feeding, the Téuthan heals 1 hit point per point of damage it inflicts. It cannot recover more hit points than the victim has or have more hit points than its usual maximum.

HUGE: No Lethality roll is required against a Téuthan. It simply takes HP damage equal to the Lethality rating, whether the Lethality roll succeeds or fails.

SEEN BUT UNSEEN: Téuthan do not appear on night-vision screens, not even as black patches or blurry areas, or on digital cameras. Night vision devices offer no advantage when shooting at them at night. A film photo of one is exposed with muddy, multicolor swirls. Téuthan born somewhat more human than these may show up more clearly.

SWAT: The Téuthan's swat affects all targets in a three-meter radius. It can be dodged, but cannot be blocked by fighting back. A human-size victim of the Téuthan's swat attack is knocked prone and must make a **STR×5** test or be stunned.

SANITY LOSS: 1/1D10 from the unnatural (or 1D6/1D20 to see it summoned).

Fire Team Bravo

Fire Team Bravo includes Cpl. Edgardo Massa (team leader), Spc. Nate Smith (grenadier rifleman), Spc. Ahe Flynn (automatic rifleman), and Pvt. Sami Ezell (rifleman). A player who takes the role of a member of Fire Team Bravo may choose four Bonds, five Motivations, and eight bonus skills for him, and add 12 points to his stats (with no more than 18 in any single stat).

Fire Team Bravo Soldier

STR 10 **CON** 10 **DEX** 10 **INT** 10 **POW** 10 **CHA** 10

HP 10 **WP** 10 **SAN** 50 **BREAKING POINT** 40

ARMOR: 6 points from tactical body armor and a Kevlar helmet.

SKILLS: Alertness 40%, Athletics 50%, Bureaucracy 30%, Craft (choose one) 40%, Drive 40%, Firearms 40%, First Aid 40%, Heavy Machinery 50%, Heavy Weapons 40%, Melee Weapons 50%, Military Science (Land) 30%, Navigate 40%, Persuade 30%, Unarmed Combat 50%.

ATTACKS: M4 carbine 40%, damage 1D12, Armor Piercing 3.

M203 grenade launcher (Smith only) 40% (+20% for the blast), Lethality 15%.

M249 light machine gun (Flynn only) 40%, Lethality 10%, Armor Piercing 3.

Two M67 fragmentation grenades (not Flynn or Smith) 50% (+20% for the blast), Lethality 15%.

M9 pistol 40%, damage 1D10.

M9 bayonet 50%, damage 1D6 (or 1D8 if fixed to an M4), Armor Piercing 3.

Unarmed 50%, damage 1D4−1.

M4 SIGHTS: The M4's M68 Close Combat Optic adds +20% a carbine shot's chance to hit as long as the shooter has taken no damage since their last action. It is good out to 200 m. A weapon light can illuminate out to 50 m.

OTHER GEAR: Advanced combat helmet with AN/PVS I4 night vision monocle. Improved outer tactical vest with pouches for an individual first aid kit (+20% to a single **First Aid** test), a team radio, a long-range encrypted radio, a GPS receiver, and a personal locator beacon. A rucksack with water, rations, and sleeping bag.

Spc. Derrick "Doc" Bolger

Combat Medic Specialist Bolger generally takes orders from the platoon sergeant, but Lt. Nagel ordered him to accompany Kryptowicz's squad for this mission.

Spc. Derrick "Doc" Bolger

Platoon medic, age 26

STR 10 **CON** 13 **DEX** 9 **INT** 17 **POW** 16 **CHA** 8

HP 12 **WP** 16 **SAN** 80 **BREAKING POINT** 64

ARMOR: 6 points from tactical body armor and a Kevlar helmet.

SKILLS: Alertness 50%, Athletics 50%, Bureaucracy 30%, Drive 40%, Firearms 40%, First Aid 70%, Heavy Machinery 30%, Heavy Weapons 20%, Medicine 40%, Melee Weapons 40%, Military Science (Land) 30%, Navigate 40%, Persuade 50%, Pharmacy 40%, Search 50%, Unarmed Combat 50%.

ATTACKS: M4 carbine 40%, damage 1D12, Armor Piercing 3.

M9 pistol 40%, damage 1D10.

M9 bayonet 40%, damage 1D6 (or 1D8 if fixed to an M16), Armor Piercing 3.

Unarmed 50%, damage 1D4−1.

EQUIPMENT: The same weapon sights and other gear as a rifleman of Fire Team Bravo, and a medium medic pack with extensive tools and medications for trauma care. The medic pack weighs 8 kg and can add +20% to four **First Aid** rolls. Only the platoon medic is issued a medic's pack.

Pregenerated Characters

One player should take the role of Kryptowicz and one should take the roll of Sutterberg. Others can play the young men of Fire Team Alpha.

Yasir Marwat, Translator

A player who takes the role of Marwat for the operation should invent three Bonds and five Motivations for him. Marwat's native language is Pashto.

Yasir Marwat

Translator, age 32

STR 9 **CON** 16 **DEX** 14 **INT** 12 **POW** 12 **CHA** 12 **HP** 13 **WP** 12 **SAN** 60

BREAKING POINT 48

ARMOR: 6 points from tactical body armor and a Kevlar helmet.

SKILLS: Athletics 50%, Criminology 50%, Dodge 50%, Drive 50%, Foreign Language (Dari) 40%, Foreign Language (English) 40%, Foreign Language (Gath) 30%, Foreign Language (Nuristani) 20%, Foreign Language (Urdu) 40%, HUMINT 40%, Law 30%, Persuade 50%, Pharmacy 40%, Stealth 50%.

ATTACKS: Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4−1.

Deputization Dossier: Yasir Marwat

You are the connection between the U.S. and the Gaths. Ten years ago, before the Americans invaded, you were a middleman for Gath opium. Over the years since then you have given up the heroin trade—most of your network is gone—and now work as a translator for the U.S. State Department.

You proposed the Gaths as a tribal ally for U.S. efforts to secure the Pakistan border. Mostly, the Gaths are despised and ignored by other Afghans. Elderly Pashtos and Tajiks have long memories of Gath raiding parties that used to seize young people from nearby communities (typically women). Gath "bride theft" has been less of a problem in recent generations, but vague rumors of the evils of Gath Valley linger. The Taliban absolutely despise the Gaths.

Everything the Gaths hear on the radio indicates that the Americans are wealthy, powerful, ruthless, and willing to slaughter Taliban. You have promised the Gaths weapons and implied that the Americans are most interested in leaving them alone once the Taliban are gone. Despite their suspicions, that sounds good enough that the Gaths are willing to at least listen.

Despite your long history with them, you know very little about the Gaths. They are strange. There are maybe 500 adults. They are the skinniest, hungriest people you ever met. You always spoke to two or three low-level men, never their chief.

Exciting changes are happening in Afghanistan. If you play your cards right, you can make a lot of money, and get out from under the thumb of extremists who don't even let people play music. The money working for the State Department is good and there are fewer legal hassles.

You must keep Samantha Sutterberg happy. She is the source of the money you currently enjoy. She is naïve, but really does think she can help people. Stranger still, she really wants to. But the Gaths don't want vitamins and blankets. They want rocket launchers.

Standard Loads

Combat Load

Each soldier is outfitted with the following combat loadout:

- M9 pistol
- M9 bayonet
- Advanced combat helmet with AN/PVS I4 night vision monocle
- Tactical body armor (6 Armor)
- Individual first aid kit (+20% to a single **First Aid** test)
- Team radio
- Long-range encrypted radio
- GPS receiver
- Personal locator beacon

Marching Load

Each soldier has a rucksack containing:

- Water
- Rations
- Sleeping bag

PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK Samantha Sutterberg	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER Foreign Service Officer, Department of State

SEX ☒ F ☐ M ☐ ________	AGE 40	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION Caucasian, slim, with dark eyes and long black hair

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	8	40%	Hit Points (HP)	10	
Constitution (CON)	12	60%	Willpower Points (WP)	12	
Dexterity (DEX)	10	50%	Sanity Points (SAN)	60	
Intelligence (INT)	16	80%	Breaking Point (BP)		48
Power (POW)	12	60%			
Charisma (CHA)	14	70%			

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

Yassir Marwat has been feckless, dishonest, on the take and on the make the whole time you've known him, but he is the best translator around. He gets things done, if not always the right things, and he knows the lay of the land in the region's criminal underworld. He is practical, sometimes to a fault, but he is nonviolent and he is enthusiastic about America.

The Gaths are an impoverished and suppressed minority who could be a tactical asset in the region. It won't surprise you if everything is complicated or turns into a disaster—you've been with State too long—but you are still going to get out there and try to make this deal work.

You liken the stories about the Gaths to the Blood Libel against the Jews. You grew up attending the only synagogue in a county where the Klan was still around. That taught you sympathy for strangers trying to keep their culture intact.

Under State Department rules, under no circumstances are you to go about armed.

GEAR AND NOTES

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
Ex-husband (Muhammed Ismail)	14
Daughter (Aisha)	14
Mother (Sara)	14

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Communication
Peacemaking
Problem-Solving
Bridging Cultures
(Defined by the Player)

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	40%	First Aid	10%	Ride	10%
Alertness	20%	Forensics	0%	Science:	0%
Anthropology	40%	Heavy Machinery	10%		
Archeology	20%	Heavy Weapons	0%	Search	20%
Art:	60%	History	60%	SIGINT	0%
Piano		HUMINT	50%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	40%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	30%	Medicine	0%	Survival	10%
Bureaucracy	60%	Melee Weapons	30%	Swim	20%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science:	0%	Unarmed Combat	40%
Craft:	0%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	10%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Language (Dari)	50%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	70%	Language (Pashto)	50%
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%	Language (Urdu)	40%
Dodge	30%	Pilot:	0%		
Drive	20%				
Firearms	20%	Psychotherapy	10%		

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	40%	1D4−1		

ARMOR
6 points from tactical body armor and a Kevlar helmet.

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

RESTRICTED
SPECIAL ACCESS

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PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER
Staff Sergeant Geordain Kryptowicz	Squad Leader, U.S. Army

SEX	AGE	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION
☐ F ☒ M ☐ ________	34	Caucasian, rugged, lean, with hard eyes

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

Driving a diplomat in three M-ATVs into a hot zone is not smart. But your job is not to say what orders are smart, it's to carry the orders out.

You started the infantry 15 years ago in the 87th ("Catamounts") Infantry Regiment: Bosnia, the Sinai, and here in Afghanistan in 2003 and again in 2006. Your battalion established the first permanent base in the Pech River valley, just a few clicks west of here at Nangalam: Firebase Catamount, now called Forward Operating Base Blessing. After two babies born while you were in combat, your wife Amy demanded a change. In 2007, you arranged a transfer to the Cacti at Schofield Barracks in beautiful Hawaii—and eighteen months later, you were fighting in Iraq. Now, here you are again in Afghanistan. And sure enough, baby number three is on the way. The longer you've been fighting, the worse things have gotten back home. And this war won't be over anytime soon.

You can read the young punks of your squad like books. There's a little of you in each of 'em. Like Hurt, you're from a crazy family. Like Clifton, there's a family history of military service, in a lot of U.S. wars and others in Poland before that. Like Samuelson, you would do anything to keep your men alive. And like Vincenzo, you want to do your part for God and country and do it right. You aren't going to hunt down al-Qaeda's second-in-command-of-the-week, but maybe shooting or humiliating the most stupid cavemen in the hills encourages others to act smarter.

GEAR AND NOTES

Combat load
Marching load
M4 carbine with M68 Close Combat Optic (+20% bonus to hit as long as Kryptowicz has taken no damage since his last action)
Six M4 magazines
Two M67 fragmentation grenades (+20% bonus to hit for blast radius included in attack chance)
Lockpicks

REMEMBER THE KEY RULES FOR MANEUVERING

SUPPRESSION: Half the team provides overwatch and suppressing fire while the others maneuvers to cover.

SPACING: Keep the men 10–20 meters apart. Don't bunch up.

WHAT YOU SAY TO THE OTHER GUYS

CPL. RAY CLIFTON ("RIGHT STUFF"), TEAM LEADER: Hurt is taking point, you're walking drag. Keep your shit wired tight.

SPC. CHARLES HURT ("CHUCKLES"), AUTOMATIC RIFLEMAN: Pucker up your butthole, shit's about to get loud.

SPC. HARLAN SAMUELSON ("HOAGIE"), GRENADIER RIFLEMAN: Get the lead out, lard-ass! Shake those flabby hams!

PFC TONY VINCENZO ("RAMBAM"), RIFLEMAN: Get your head on a swivel, dammit. Focus. Focus!

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED
Lockpicks	DEX

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	60%	1D4−1		
M4 carbine	60%	1D12 (10% Lethality w/ burst)	3	100 m
M9 pistol	60%	1D10		15 m
M9 bayonet	60%	1D6 (1D8 if affixed)	3	
M67 frag grenade	80%	15% Lethality		20 m

ARMOR
6 points from tactical body armor and a Kevlar helmet.

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	13	65%	Hit Points (HP)	14	
Constitution (CON)	14	70%	Willpower Points (WP)	13	
Dexterity (DEX)	12	60%	Sanity Points (SAN)	60	
Intelligence (INT)	9	45%	Breaking Point (BP)		52
Power (POW)	13	65%			
Charisma (CHA)	8	40%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
Wife (Amy) and kids (Allie and Szymon)	8
Doom School	8

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS
Patriotism
Survival
Keeping Young Punks on the Straight and Narrow
Family
(Defined by the Player)

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE
Violence ☒ ☒ ☒ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	40%	Ride	10%
Alertness	60%	Forensics	0%	Science:	0%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	40%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	50%	Search	20%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	40%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	60%	Medicine	0%	Survival	40%
Bureaucracy	40%	Melee Weapons	50%	Swim	20%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science: Land	60%	Unarmed Combat	60%
Craft:	0%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	50%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Language (Arabic)	40%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	40%	Language (Pashto)	40%
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%		
Dodge	60%	Pilot:	0%		
Drive	40%				
Firearms	60%	Psychotherapy	10%		

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PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK Corporal Raymond “Right Stuff” Clifton	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER Fire Team Leader, U.S. Army

SEX ☐ F ☒ M ☐ ________	AGE 25	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION African American, tall, rigid, straight-laced

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	12	60%	Hit Points (HP)	12	
Constitution (CON)	12	60%	Willpower Points (WP)	12	
Dexterity (DEX)	11	55%	Sanity Points (SAN)	60	
Intelligence (INT)	13	65%	Breaking Point (BP)		48
Power (POW)	12	60%			
Charisma (CHA)	12	60%			

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

You always knew you’d wind up in uniform. You just figured it would be Air Force for life, like your dad, Major James Clifton.

Yes, *that* Major James Clifton.

People ask if you knew he was selling secrets to the Chinese, and your response is always what it has to be: He’s your dad. He’s innocent. He would have died to defend his country, and anyone who says different doesn’t know him. He raised you on honor and loyalty and patriotism.

You only saw him cry when your mother died, and at the funeral of a test pilot he had known since his days as an airman. He didn’t cry when he was found guilty or sentenced. That’s how you know he’s innocent.

You did not last long in the Air Force Academy after your father’s conviction, but the Army wasn’t picky. Moving all the way to Hawaii was hard, but you fit in at Schofield Barracks. You spent a year fighting in Iraq. You know you’re unlikely to ever make officer. But the Army trusts you with the lives of your fellow soldiers. That will have to do.

Integrity is everything. The way your father was railroaded into prison shook the faith in the government that you spent your life learning. If orders go against what you know is right, and there’s no way to reconcile them, the orders have to give way. You cannot count on much. Count on your conscience.

Kryptowicz has been through a lot and his instincts are solid. Charles Hurt is fearless, if sadistic and undisciplined. Hoagie has a good heart and is no stranger to hard work. You worry about Rambam. He’s a fine driver and smart enough, but Florida ain’t Afghanistan.

GEAR AND NOTES

Combat load
Marching load
M4 carbine with M68 Close Combat Optic (+20% bonus to hit as long as Right Stuff has taken no damage since his last action)
Six M4 magazines
Two M67 fragmentation grenades (+20% bonus to hit for blast radius included in attack chance)

REMEMBER THE KEY RULES FOR MANEUVERING

SUPPRESSION: Half the team provides overwatch and suppressing fire while the others maneuvers to cover.

SPACING: Keep the men 10–20 meters apart. Don’t bunch up.

WHAT YOU SAY TO THE OTHER GUYS

SGT. GEORDAIN KRYPTOWICZ, SQUAD LEADER: Rambam goes around east with the Oshkosh and two of us head west on foot. Me and Chuckles? You want to go with him? Understood.

SPC. CHARLES HURT (“CHUCKLES”), AUTOMATIC RIFLEMAN: That’s not funny, it’s just disgusting.

SPC. HARLAN SAMUELSON (“HOAGIE”), GRENADIER RIFLEMAN: It’s stuck. Hoagie! Gimme a hand. On three. One, two, push!

PFC TONY VINCENZO (“RAMBAM”), RIFLEMAN: Here, take my soup, I don’t want it. It’s hot. I know it tastes like pee, but it’s hot.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
Dad (James Clifton)	12
Doom School	12
Trinity Lutheran Church in Wahiawa	12

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS
Self Improvement
Integrity
Finding Out What Dad Did
Family Honor
(Defined by the Player)

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*   Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	50%	1D4−1		
M4 carbine	50%	1D12 (10% Lethality w/ burst)	3	100 m
M9 pistol	50%	1D10		15 m
M9 bayonet	40%	1D6 (1D8 if affixed)	3	
M67 frag grenade	70%	15% Lethality		20 m

ARMOR
6 points from tactical body armor and a Kevlar helmet.

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	40%	Ride	10%
Alertness	50%	Forensics	0%	Science:	0%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	40%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	40%	Search	20%
Art:	0%	History	50%	SIGINT	40%
		HUMINT	50%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	50%	Medicine	0%	Survival	10%
Bureaucracy	40%	Melee Weapons	40%	Swim	20%
Computer Science	40%	Military Science: Land	50%	Unarmed Combat	50%
Craft:	0%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	50%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Language (Pashto)	20%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	40%	Military Science (Air)	20%
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%		
Dodge	30%	Pilot:	0%		
Drive	40%				
Firearms	50%	Psychotherapy	10%		

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PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER
Specialist Charles “Chuckles” Hurt	Automatic Rifleman, U.S. Army

SEX	AGE	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION
☐ F ☒ M ☐ ________	23	Caucasian, tall, beefy, constantly smiling, with mean eyes

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

It’s a fine line between charming and creepy, and you love dancing on that line. You store up every joke you can find and hit the guys with the worst of them, meaning the best.

Your family back in Nebraska was about guns, bikes, and substance abuse. Meth just made you feel weird, and you keep your drinking to one a day, at most, because you saw it turn your dad into an asshole and your mom into a zombie. Not that you have much temptation to resist in Afghanistan. And nobody has a Harley for you to ride. But the Army sure as shit has guns.

You learned the greatest secret of life when you started fighting in Iraq. It’s a simple secret: Killing people is fun, and anyone who says different hasn’t tried it. Aunt Sissy said life has the highest value of anything, and when you were 10 she showed you a whole album of aborted fetus pictures to prove it. That means taking life is huge. That matters. That’s important. Even if it’s some illiterate yak-herder who wouldn’t recognize a roll of toilet paper.

Right Stuff thinks you’re crazy. Kryptowicz likes you just fine as long as you fade Talibans when he says so. Hoagie is hard on the outside but soft on the inside. You’re happy to do his killing for him. Rambam is a natural marksman, but he’s not a real killer. Not yet. Still, they’re a better family than the one you left back home. Sooner or later, it will be your turn to get killed. Why not do it for the guys? That would be a real laugh. Chuckles the hero. Hooah.

GEAR AND NOTES

Combat load
Marching load
M249 light machine gun
Three 200-round belts of M249 ammunition in cloth pouches, weighing 2.5 kg each

WHAT YOU SAY TO THE OTHER GUYS

SGT. GEORDAIN KRYPTOWICZ, SQUAD LEADER: I see him, Sarge. He’s meat.

CPL. RAY CLIFTON (“RIGHT STUFF”), TEAM LEADER: I’m going to get you laid, Clifton. I mean like nasty laid. Where you can’t look her in the eye afterwards. Gonna get you laid good. All these guys will thank me.

SPC. HARLAN SAMUELSON (“HOAGIE”), GRENADIER RIFLEMAN: …the American says, “What’s a shortage?” And the Iraqi says, “What’s an opinion?” And the Afghan says, “What’s an electricity?”

PFC TONY VINCENZO (“RAMBAM”), RIFLEMAN: …and then the Taliban guy says, “What? Aren’t they all like that under the burka?”

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	60%	1D4		
M249 light machine gun	60%	10% Lethality	3	200 m
M9 pistol	60%	1D10		15 m
M9 bayonet	70%	1D6 (1D8 if affixed)	3	

ARMOR
6 points from tactical body armor and a Kevlar helmet.

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	14	70%	Hit Points (HP)	14	
Constitution (CON)	13	65%	Willpower Points (WP)	9	
Dexterity (DEX)	13	65%	Sanity Points (SAN)	40	
Intelligence (INT)	11	55%	Breaking Point (BP)		36
Power (POW)	9	45%			
Charisma (CHA)	9	45%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
Doom School	9
Fucked-up family	9
Sgt. Kryptowicz	9

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS
Cruelty
Sexual Adventurism
Superiority
Half Funny “Ha Ha,” Half Funny “What an Asshole”
(Defined by the Player)

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☒ ☒ ☒ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	40%	Ride	10%
Alertness	70%	Forensics	0%	Science:	0%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	50%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	60%	Search	20%
Art: Rap	30%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	50%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	50%	Medicine	0%	Survival	10%
Bureaucracy	30%	Melee Weapons	70%	Swim	20%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science: Land	40%	Unarmed Combat	60%
Craft:	0%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	40%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%		
Demolitions	50%	Persuade	40%		
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%		
Dodge	40%	Pilot:	0%		
Drive	40%				
Firearms	60%	Psychotherapy	10%		

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PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK Specialist Harlan “Hoagie” Samuelson	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER Grenadier Rifleman, U.S. Army

SEX ☐ F ☒ M ☐ ________	AGE 22	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION Biracial (African American/Caucasian), friendly, huge and powerful

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	17	85%	Hit Points (HP)	16	
Constitution (CON)	14	70%	Willpower Points (WP)	13	
Dexterity (DEX)	10	50%	Sanity Points (SAN)	60	
Intelligence (INT)	9	45%	Breaking Point (BP)		48
Power (POW)	12	60%			
Charisma (CHA)	10	50%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
Wife (Gwen)	10
Daughter (Becky)	10
Doom School	10
High school football team (the Cavaliers)	10

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Making a Better Life

Finding Something You’re Good At

Being a Good Father

Football

(Defined by the Player)

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

Maybe you could have gotten a football scholarship, but it’s hard to shine as an offensive linebacker. Your grades were never all that good. You were more interested in smoking weed and chasing tail. Getting Gwen pregnant made things a lot less complicated. Not easier, but at least there was no more college talk. You needed a job that could provide for your kid and pay for a wedding, and in your hometown of Flint, Michigan, there are guys with college degrees working fast food. But the Army didn’t give much of a damn about your ACT score. Your recruiter got you through your urine test. Pretty soon you were in Iraq, and now you’re in Afghanistan.

The others tease you about being fat. You’re not, but that’s the price you pay for being bigger than any of them.

Sarge yells a lot, but that’s his job. He has been through all kinds of shit and still has all his fingers and toes, so you pay attention. Right Stuff is uptight but smart. Chuckles is funny and scary at the same time. Rambam is a good kid, but he’s green. Try to keep him alive.

GEAR AND NOTES

Combat load

Marching load

M4 carbine with M68 Close Combat Optic (+20% bonus to hit as long as Hoagie has taken no damage since his last action)

Six M4 magazines

M203 grenade launcher attached to carbine

M203 grenades: 12 high-explosive rounds, 3 tear-gas rounds, 3 signal rounds, 6 smoke rounds (+20% bonus to hit for blast radius included in attack chance)

WHAT YOU SAY TO THE OTHER GUYS

SGT. GEORDAIN KRYPTOWICZ, SQUAD LEADER: I’m on it, Sarge.

CPL. RAY CLIFTON (“RIGHT STUFF”), TEAM LEADER: C’mon Ray. Give the guys a break. Tony’s freezing his ass off.

SPC. CHARLES HURT (“CHUCKLES”), AUTOMATIC RIFLEMAN: Shit, Chuck, he’s on the hill! Take his ass out!

PFC TONY VINCENZO (“RAMBAM”), RIFLEMAN: It ain’t the cold, buddy, it’s the wind chill.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	60%	1D4+1		
M4 carbine	50%	1D12 (10% Lethality w/ burst)	3	100 m
M9 pistol	50%	1D10		15 m
M9 bayonet	50%	1D6 (1D8 if affixed)	3	
M203 grenade launcher	80%	15% Lethality		150 m

ARMOR

6 points from tactical body armor and a Kevlar helmet.

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	50%	Ride	10%
Alertness	50%	Forensics	0%	Science:	0%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	50%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	60%	Search	20%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	70%	Medicine	0%	Survival	10%
Bureaucracy	30%	Melee Weapons	50%	Swim	20%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science:	40%	Unarmed Combat	60%
Craft:	0%	Land		Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	40%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%		
Demolitions	40%	Persuade	30%		
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%		
Dodge	50%	Pilot:	0%		
Drive	40%				
Firearms	50%	Psychotherapy	10%		

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PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER
Private First Class Tony “Rambam” Vincenzo	Rifleman, U.S. Army

SEX	AGE	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION
☐ F ☒ M ☐ __________	20	Caucasian, rail-thin, fidgety, with dark brown hair and eyes

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

You were too young to sign up after your grandma got killed in 9/11, before your family moved to Florida, but you wanted to. Even all these years later, you couldn’t wait for your chance to hit back at the guys who crashed those planes.

Of course, you have read reports and seen videos that turned everything upside down. Was al-Qaeda behind 9/11 or was it the CIA? Or did the CIA put it all in motion, under orders from Dick Cheney on behalf of Halliburton and the Trilateral Commission, and use al-Qaeda to pull the trigger? Who knows what to believe, anyway?

Being here, in Afghanistan, that’s real. Those pricks who shoot mortars at your firebase are real. You met a guy who got his nose cut off for teaching girls how to read. He was real as cancer. Maybe these assholes aren’t al-Qaeda assholes, but they’re all in the same league.

This high up, Afghanistan is icy cold and barren, and so primitive you can barely believe it. You have to be doing some good here. It’s hard to imagine how someplace so ate up and backwards could get worse.

Clifton tries to keep your spirits up, which just gives Chuckles fuel for his jokes. It occurred to you one day that the Taliban might have someone like Chuckles on their side, too, and it was not a comforting thought. Kryptowicz just barks orders, like you’re a piece in his machine. Hoagie’s all right. The two of you bivouac together sometimes. When the snow starts falling, the guy’s like a space heater.

GEAR AND NOTES

Combat load
Marching load
M4 carbine with M68 Close Combat Optic (+20% bonus to hit as long as Rambam has taken no damage since his last action)
Six M4 magazines
Two M67 fragmentation grenades (+20% bonus to hit for blast radius included in attack chance)

WHAT YOU SAY TO THE OTHER GUYS

SGT. GEORDAIN KRYPTOWICZ, SQUAD LEADER: Any faster and we’re gonna spin out, Sarge!

CPL. RAY CLIFTON (“RIGHT STUFF”), TEAM LEADER: Jesus, I’m fine! I’ll drive the M-ATV. Fine, yeah, I’ll drive.

SPC. CHARLES HURT (“CHUCKLES”), AUTOMATIC RIFLEMAN: That ain’t funny, man, it’s just gross.

SPC. HARLAN SAMUELSON (“HOAGIE”), GRENADIER RIFLEMAN: How come you stay so warm? Metabolism? I should get one of those!

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	50%	1D4−1		
M4 carbine	70%	1D12 (10% Lethality w/ burst)	3	100 m
M9 pistol	70%	1D10		15 m
M9 bayonet	50%	1D6 (1D8 if affixed)	3	
M67 frag grenade	70%	15% Lethality		20 m

ARMOR
6 points from tactical body armor and a Kevlar helmet.

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	11	55%	Hit Points (HP)	11	
Constitution (CON)	11	55%	Willpower Points (WP)	13	
Dexterity (DEX)	16	80%	Sanity Points (SAN)	65	
Intelligence (INT)	9	45%	Breaking Point (BP)		52
Power (POW)	13	65%			
Charisma (CHA)	12	60%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
Doom School	12
Mom and dad (Hope and Michael)	12
Sister (Mina)	12
High school best friend (Terry)	12

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS
Getting Back to Florida
Avenging 9/11
Protecting the Defenseless
Conspiracy Theorizing
(Defined by the Player)

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE
Violence ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	30%	Ride	10%
Alertness	50%	Forensics	0%	Science:	0%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	60%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	40%	Search	20%
Art:	40%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
Rap		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	40%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	50%	Medicine	0%	Survival	10%
Bureaucracy	10%	Melee Weapons	50%	Swim	30%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science:	30%	Unarmed Combat	50%
Craft:	40%	Land		Unnatural	0%
Mechanic		Navigate	50%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	40%		
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	20%		
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%		
Dodge	50%	Pilot:	0%		
Drive	20%				
Firearms	70%	Psychotherapy	10%		

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21 NOV 2012

// Sick Again //

> “Those diseases which medicines do not cure, iron cures; those which iron cannot cure, fire cures; and those which fire cannot cure, are to be reckoned wholly incurable.”
>
> —Hippocrates

Introduction

The players' characters are part of a quick-response group of doctors and scientists with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They work for the Emergency Operations Center, the crisis-response section of the Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response. Its experts can respond to an emergency in hours while formulating a broad strategy. When an unidentified infectious disease breaks out in Hudson's Well, Arizona, they drop everything and fly out to help deal with it.

"Sick Again" refers to the players' characters not as Agents but as "Researchers," whatever their individual occupations. They are not yet part of Delta Green.

Because the Hudson's Well disease is unidentified, we call it "______pathy."

Pregenerated Characters

The Researchers are CDC associates who were on call in case of trouble like that in Hudson's Well. They receive notice of their deployment at about 9:00 a.m., collect their go-bags and kiss their loved ones goodbye, and rush to get on a noon flight to Phoenix. The Researchers' direct overseer is Dr. Stacy Marholm.

The pregenerated Researchers are all partially adapted to violence: They automatically succeed at Sanity tests for seeing and working with bodies and gore, but not for inflicting violence.

Equipment

The Researchers are well prepared and have a lot of gear. Do they require anything not listed here? If it sounds reasonable, give it to them. If not, it's unavailable. If in doubt, allow a **Bureaucracy** test to decide.

GO-BAGS: Each researcher keeps a suitcase ready for travel, with clothing, toiletries, any necessary medications, personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks, and goggles, duct tape for jury-rigging repairs to their HAZMAT suits, and a CDC credit card for travel expenses.

COMPUTERS AND PHONES: Assume that everyone on the team has access to a toughened laptop computer with a satellite uplink. A laptop's titanium case provides Armor 5 if used as a shield, once. After taking damage, a laptop is useless. Each Researcher also has a satellite phone and a high-end smartphone. These offer an extensive professional library.

PORTABLE DIAGNOSTICS LAB: The team's lab is in several bulky, heavy black suitcases. It is equipped to perform realtime conversion on cerebrospinal fluid, protein electrophoresis, protein immunoblot and assorted blood culture tests. With a successful **Medicine** or **Science** (**Biology**) roll, these tools can tell whether symptoms are caused by prions, viruses, bacteria, fungus, radiation, or chemical exposure.

TREATMENT OPTIONS: A single large suitcase, metal and weighty. Inside, it's packed with exotic and restricted pharmaceuticals, such as linezolid, amikacin and colistin. At the Handler's discretion, these grant a Researcher a +20% bonus to a **Medicine** roll to treat illness or the effects of chemical weapons. It's nicknamed "the Doomsday Bag."

HAZMAT SUITS: Two Level A suits and two Level B suits for each researcher, each stored in a large, red duffel bag.

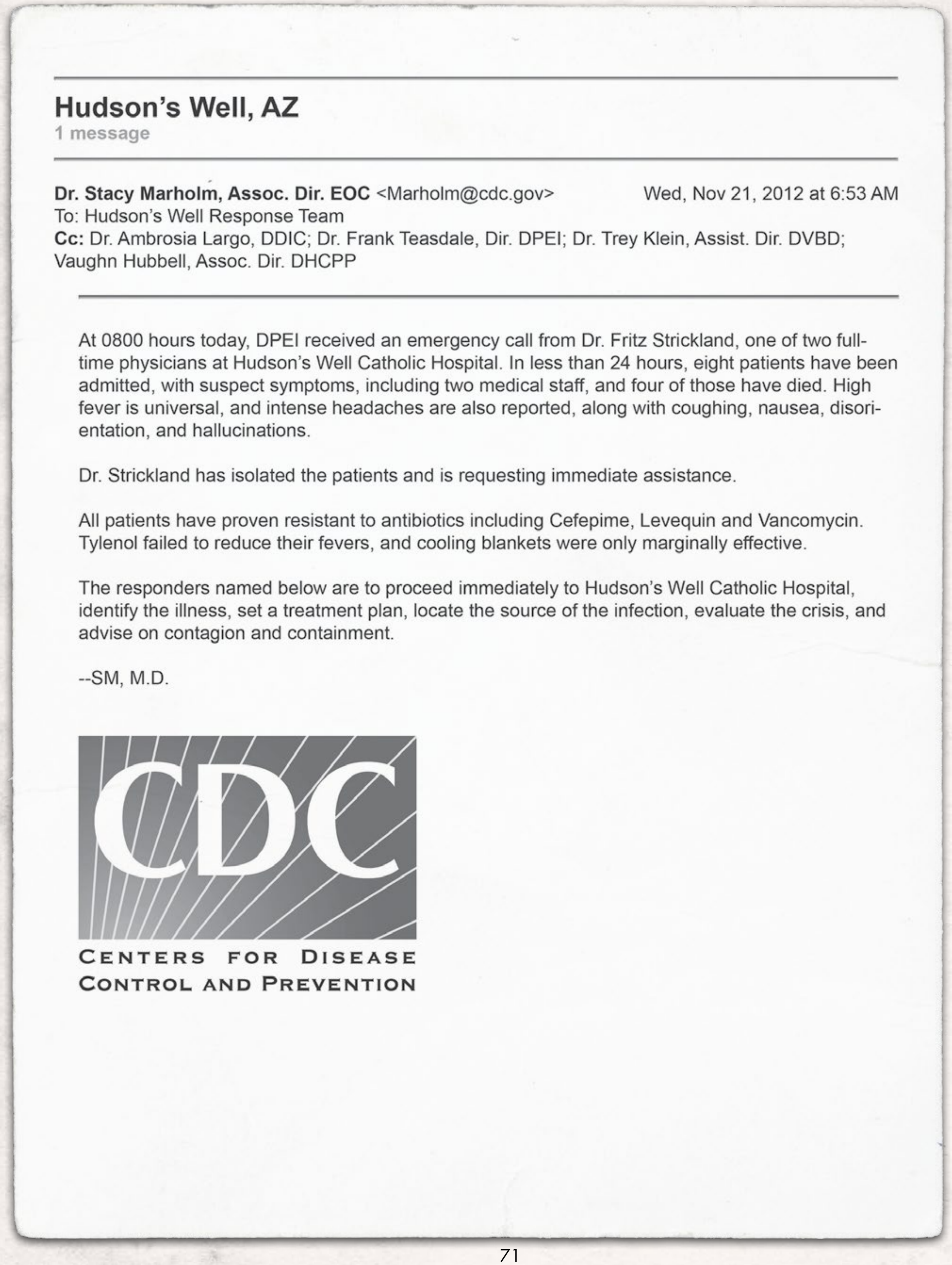
Hazmat Suits

Considering the virulence of ______pathy, the Researchers may wish to wear the most protective gear available, Level A hazmat suits. Other kinds are available, described in **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT** on page 108.

A Level A hazmat suit completely covers you from head to foot and looks like a smurf-blue space-suit. Its air supply is entirely self-contained, so you must either carry a heavy air tank or be connected to one nearby. It is essentially impossible for a pathogen to penetrate to the person inside, as long as the suit is uncompromised. A Level B suit features treated coveralls, hood, and a gas mask, with the oxygen tank worn outside the suit. Level C and D protection add gloves, mask, boots, and other protections to ordinary clothing.

Each suit comes in a large, red duffel bag. Partners must help each other don the suits, sealing every seam with duct tape. It is very difficult to see facial features in the suits' large hoods, so experienced wearers use markers to write the wearer's last name and blood type in large letters, front and back. Each suit is

Briefing Memo Handout



Hudson's Well, AZ

1 message

Dr. Stacy Marholm, Assoc. Dir. EOC <Marholm@cdc.gov> Wed, Nov 21, 2012 at 6:53 AM
To: Hudson's Well Response Team
Cc: Dr. Ambrosia Largo, DDIC; Dr. Frank Teasdale, Dir. DPEI; Dr. Trey Klein, Assist. Dir. DVBD; Vaughn Hubbell, Assoc. Dir. DHCPP

At 0800 hours today, DPEI received an emergency call from Dr. Fritz Strickland, one of two full-time physicians at Hudson's Well Catholic Hospital. In less than 24 hours, eight patients have been admitted, with suspect symptoms, including two medical staff, and four of those have died. High fever is universal, and intense headaches are also reported, along with coughing, nausea, disorientation, and hallucinations.

Dr. Strickland has isolated the patients and is requesting immediate assistance.

All patients have proven resistant to antibiotics including Cefepime, Levequin and Vancomycin. Tylenol failed to reduce their fevers, and cooling blankets were only marginally effective.

The responders named below are to proceed immediately to Hudson's Well Catholic Hospital, identify the illness, set a treatment plan, locate the source of the infection, evaluate the crisis, and advise on contagion and containment.

--SM, M.D.

CDC

CENTERS FOR DISEASE
CONTROL AND PREVENTION

marked with an expiration date, beyond which the possibility of deterioration makes it too risky to wear. The Researchers' suits are a bright, light blue. The color of the suit has no intrinsic meaning.

Actions

Wearing a Level A HAZMAT suit incurs a –20% penalty to **Alertness**, **Dodge**, and attack rolls. Wearing a Level B suit incurs a –20% penalty to **Alertness** rolls.

A Level A or Level B HAZMAT suit includes gloves that are too thick for fine manipulation such as typing—and working a firearm unless the trigger guard has been removed.

Air Supplies

A Level A suit requires oxygen supplied by a tank. The oxygen tank can be self-contained or external. A self-contained tank is worn under the suit like a backpack. It cannot be changed without removing the whole suit, requiring decontamination. An external tank is stored on a cart that must be dragged around. It is cumbersome and often in the way, but it can be exchanged safely for a new tank without removing the suit. Changing an external tank takes a few minutes.

Either kind of tank has enough oxygen for 60 minutes of quiet activity. Every attempted **Athletics, Dodge, Melee Weapons, Unarmed Combat, CON×5,** or **STR×5** test uses up 5 minutes of oxygen.

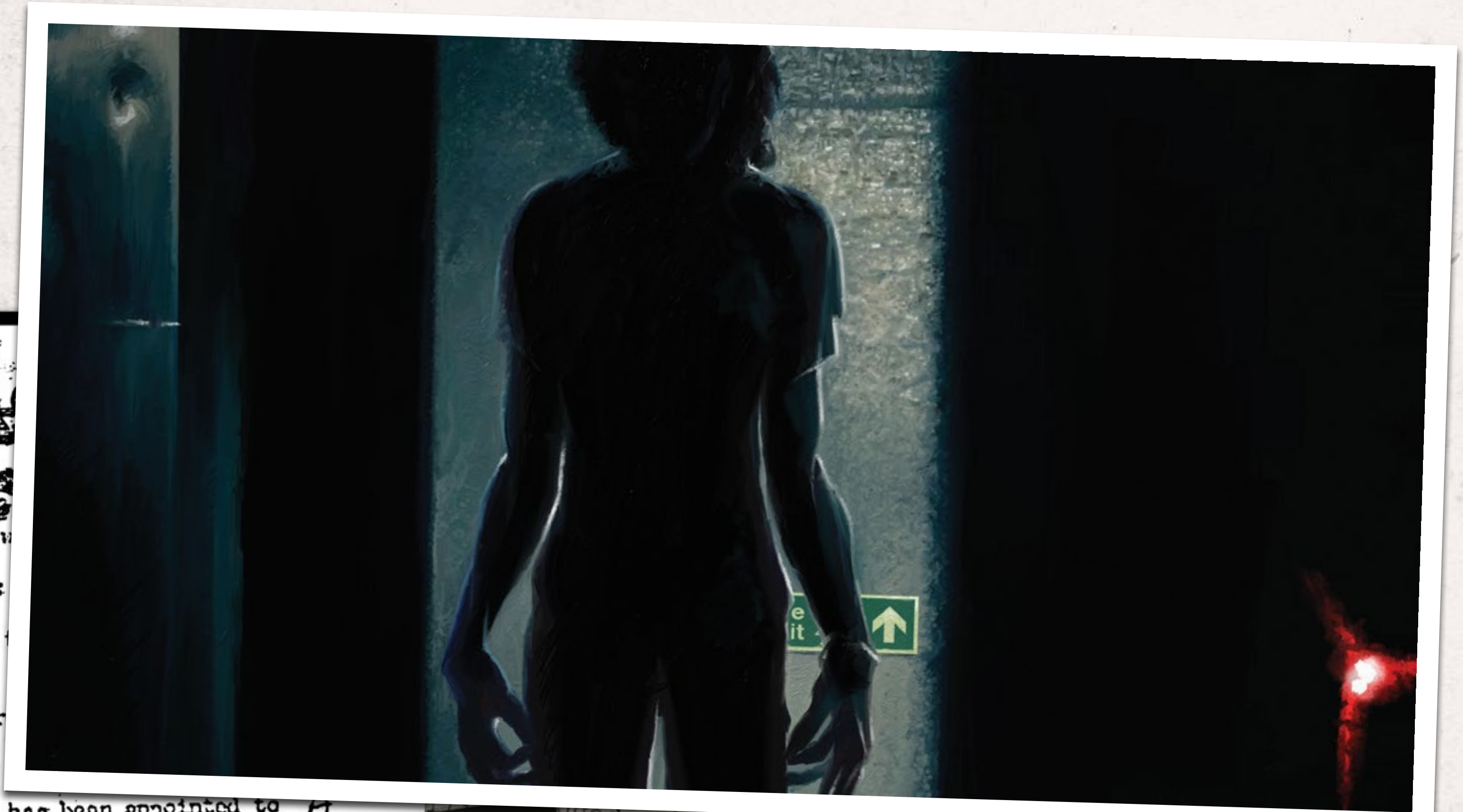
A researcher who runs out of oxygen suffocates, as described on page 62 of the Agent's Handbook.

Breach

The first time a wearer takes damage, the suit is compromised: the suit is torn, a seal breaks, or a valve jostles loose and lets air from the outside in. These suits are overpressurized, meaning that (1) they puff up around you when sealed and (2) if torn or gapped, the interior air supply blows out, pushing toxins away. Any time the suit is compromised, the wearer knows it right away. In a hot zone, this costs 0/1 **SAN** from helplessness.

Decontamination

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency



Reponse regulations, no one is permitted to enter a hazardous area until a decontamination operation is established. Decontamination requires its own extensive team of workers. The work is so physically strenuous that shifts on the decon line must be limited to one or two hours at a time. Decon workers must wear personal protective equipment one level below that worn by active responders who go into the hot zone. Air monitors can help warn of potential atmospheric contamination so decon workers can increase their protection.

Working a decon line requires training. Most hospital workers, police, firefighters, and paramedics are qualified.

The decon station has water hoses, long brushes, buckets, cleaning agents, tarps, wading pools, pumps, and tanks to hold contaminated water. Nearby wastewater treatment services can dispose of contaminated water safely. Physical waste, such as bags of used equipment, can be incinerated or otherwise securely disposed of.

The decon station should be set up in the "warm zone," far enough from the hazard that decon workers are not in immediate danger. It should be upwind of the hazard. It should be accessible by ambulances and other transport vehicles.

Background

Retired physicists Rosamund Keyert and Jeffrey Langzweil made the discovery of a lifetime, and it killed them both.

Keyert's work at CalTech in the 2000s stumbled into the invisible fallout of MAJESTIC's experiments with Tillinghast Resonator technology. She had no connection to MAJESTIC projects, and no insight into their experiments, but her paper and its supporting experiments caught the Program's attention. Strings were pulled. Instead of being hailed as a genius, she found herself ridiculed, defunded, and disgraced.

In 2009, Keyert and her husband, Langzweil, moved to her hometown of Hudson's Well, Arizona. With her husband as assistant, Keyert started over with a basement lab and an unquenchable drive to prove everyone wrong. On 19 NOV 2012, she succeeded far beyond her wildest dreams.

To grasp what happened, it helps to ask the question "If time travel is possible, where are all the time-travelers?" One scientist suggested that a time machine would need to work as a closed loop. You would turn it on to create something like a beacon, or an anchor, for itself. Once it was on, you could energize the other end of it—the same device, farther down the time stream—and bridge the temporal gap between them.

That's exactly what MAJESTIC—or rather, its vestiges under the management of Delta Green, aka the Program—did. On 19 NOV 2012, the Program closed just such a loop that had opened aboard the destroyer escort U.S.S. *Eldridge* on 28 OCT 1943.

Keyert, accidentally listening in, opened a second, smaller hole through spacetime.

Instead of the predictable chirp from her computer indicating that a mysterious signal had been detected again, there was a flood of violet sparks and, shoving past damaged metal, a visitor.

Keyert estimated that the wormhole had stayed open for 2.21 seconds and had stretched to 1.17 m in width. The entity that emerged from the wormhole was a woman, clearly human though enormously tall. She had rudimentary English and seemed to be named Thartha. Keyert and Langzweil calmed the terrified visitor, gave her food and water, and questioned her as they tried to figure out what they had accomplished.

Thartha lingered in Keyert's basement for two days, until she saw Langzweil get sick. Thartha deduced that she may be the cause of the illness. She feared being murdered as a carrier, and she feared that the increasing charge of T-radiation would overcome her inoculation. Thartha, no scientist, did not know how to correct the problem or engineer the machine to send her back.

Thartha killed Langzweil in a vain attempt to keep the disease from spreading. Keyert killed herself. Thartha hid.

Hudson's Well was already dying from a disease that could do Thartha no harm.

The Disease

Keyert and Langzweil were infected with a microbial infestation from beyond. We call it only "______pathy," leaving it for the players' Researchers to name it. The time traveler Thartha was inoculated against the disease, but her passage through the weird null space ("N-space") that lies between *now* and *then* attracted the microscopic entities that cause it. She became a passive carrier for ______pathy (µ) and its original source in Hudson's Well.

The microbes that cause ______pathy are a tiny version of the liquivores from N-space, those inky jellyfish-like entities that float, swim, and devour in weird dimensions coterminous with our own. N-space and its inhabitants were first discovered by Crawford Tillinghast and studied by MAJESTIC and Delta Green, but the microbes are new. They attack nerve fibers and feed on electrical impulses that pass through them.

The victim's death, when it comes, is caused by cerebral hemorrhage or heart failure.

Victims remain infectious for about an hour after death.

WARNING: Use the following detailed steps only for players' Researchers who are exposed to ______pathy. For a nonplayer character, simply say the character advances to each new stage after 1D6 hours, getting sicker and sicker.

Exposure

The ______pathy infestation spreads by proximity. Most physicians and scientists interpret this as spreading through inhalation, accidental fluid exchange, or ingestion, but it is more pernicious than those. Any mammal within about one meter of a victim who is in the second or third stage of infection (see below), or the corpse of a victim who died from ______pathy, must make a **Luck** roll about once every five minutes or be exposed, entering Stage 1 of the infection. (A character who critically succeeds at the **Luck** roll turns out to be naturally resistant. That character gains a +20% bonus to future **Luck** rolls to avoid exposure and to **CON** tests to resist the disease's progression.)

HAZMAT suits offer no protection at all.

Likely circumstances for exposure include:

- Riding in the same car.
- Sitting together at a meal or in a waiting room.
- Standing near each other in a line.
- Close contact such as wrestling.
- Physical intimacy.
- Providing first aid.
- Offering consolation.
- Conducting an interview.
- Conducting a thorough medical examination.

Stage 1

After the victim is exposed, the microbes concentrate in the commissural fibers of the medulla oblongata. Nerve cells break down. Symptoms appear after the first 1D4+1 hours, starting with fever, chills, and weakness and developing into one or more of these; choose them or roll 1D4 for the number and 1D8 to identify each:

1. Headache.
2. Coughing.
3. Vomiting.
4. Impairment of sensory and motor functions.
5. Impairment of memory and concentration.
6. Sleep disturbances.
7. Mood changes.
8. Uneven pupil dilation.

Infection costs 0/1D4 **SAN** from helplessness. After 2D4 hours, the victim must make a **CON×5** test at a –20% penalty.

- » **FUMBLE:** As with a failure, and the victim loses a point of INT permanently.
- » **FAILURE:** The victim takes 1D4 damage and advances to the second stage.
- » **SUCCESS:** The victim takes 1 damage and repeats the first stage of infection.

Stage 2

After the victim fails a second **CON×5** test, the infestation spreads to the brainstem. The infestation becomes infectious at this stage. It mainly affects the pons, which adds new symptoms; choose them or roll 2D4 for the number and 1D10 to identify each:

1. Impaired respiration.
2. Involuntary movements.
3. Impaired hearing, equilibrium, and taste.
4. Unexpected facial sensations such as touch and pain.
5. Involuntary eye movement and facial expressions.
6. Uncontrolled chewing and swallowing.
7. Secretion of saliva and tears.
8. Lack of bladder control.
9. Sleep paralysis.
10. Disturbed dreams.

After 2D4 hours, the victim must make a **CON×5** test at a –20% penalty.

- » **FUMBLE:** As with a failure, and the victim loses 1D4 points of INT permanently.
- » **FAILURE:** The victim takes 1D4 damage and, if still alive, advances to the third stage.
- » **SUCCESS:** The victim takes 1 damage and repeats the second stage of infection.

Stage 3

The victim begins to sense N-space itself. These sensations begin in dreams and, over a few hours, progress to what rational medicine interprets as waking hallucinations; choose them or roll 1D4 for the number and 1D4 to identify each:

1. A feeling suffocating in black vacuum, drowning in dark water, or falling while being devoured by unseen monsters.
2. Inexplicable buzzing or whispering touches or sounds.
3. Unidentifiable, nauseating tastes or smells.
4. Impossible, living, monstrous things seen all around, eating each other, drawn to people who have no idea they are there.

These sensations cost 1/1D8 **SAN** from the unnatural, once per hour. Victims who go temporarily insane become violently self-destructive, trying to destroy their own sensory organs.

Every 2D4 hours in the third stage of infection, a victim must make a **CON×5** test at a –20% penalty.

- » **FUMBLE:** As with a failure, and the victim loses 1D4 points of INT permanently.
- » **FAILURE:** The victim takes 1D6 damage. Either way, the victim remains in the third stage of infection.
- » **SUCCESS:** The victim takes 1 damage.

Treatment

Someday, someone will invent the inoculation that protects Thartha. But not yet.

Treating Symptoms

The first-stage and second-stage symptoms of ______pathy can be reduced slightly by medications to treat fever, sensory confusion, hallucinations, convulsions, and pain. In effect, a successful **Medicine** or **Pharmacy** test halves the damage (round up).

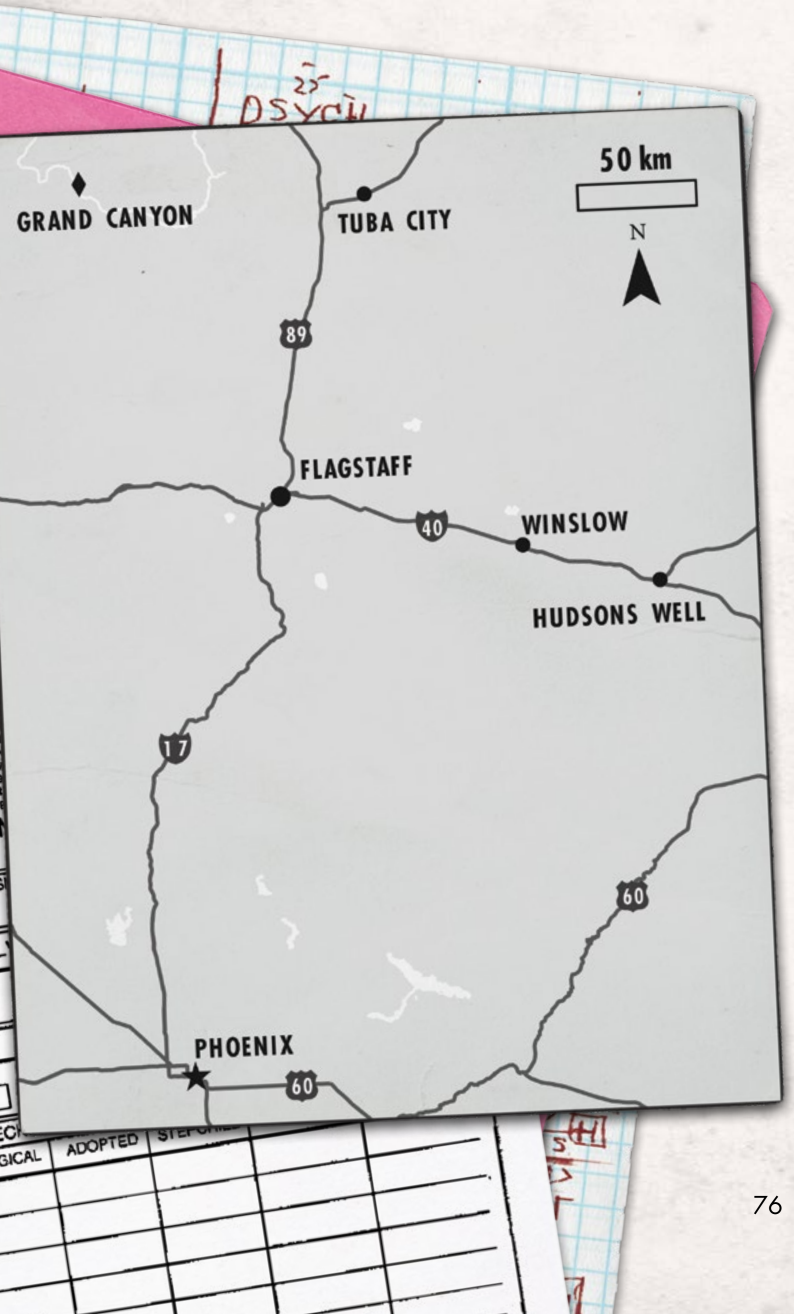
Third-stage symptoms can be alleviated only by heavy sedation. That requires a **Medicine** test; if it fails, the patient comes in and out of sedation, raving, and only a medically induced coma can quiet them; if it fumbles, the patient dies.

Shock Treatment

The disease can sometimes be cured by electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). In ECT, the physician runs a small electrical current (usually 240 or 450 volts at 0.8 or 0.9 ampheres) directly through the brain while the patient is under general anesthesia. (Without general anesthesia, the convulsions are painful and distressing.)

A similar current could be delivered by attaching a TENS (transcutanious electrical nerve stimulation) machine, which typically can deliver up to 350 volts at up to 0.7 amps, to the patient's head. It hurts. A lot.

Stun guns have very high voltage, which is expected to be attenuated by clothing. The standard Taser delivers 50,000 volts, but the manufacturer estimates an average of 1,200 volts delivered into the target. The current is delivered at 0.01 to 0.05 amps. Applying a stun gun with the lowest voltage and amperage to the patient's skull, through padding to reduce the voltage, could work. That, too, *hurts*.



Whatever the source, the shock must be administered for 10 to 20 seconds. If the physician succeeds at a **Medicine** roll at a –20% penalty, the electrical current severs the connection between the microbes and our dimension, halting the infection completely. If the **Medicine** roll fails, the treatment makes partial progress—symptoms abate for an hour or two—and the patient takes 1D4 damage, or 2D4 with a fumble.

Defibrillation

A defibrillator delivers 200 to 1,000 or more volts at about 32 amps. Attached to either side of the patient's head and set at a low charge, its shock certainly destroys the infestation. It also inflicts 2D8 damage.

Electrocution

Another option is passing a massive current through the patient's body. This requires a current of 50,000 volts or more, found only in a long-range power transmission line or at a power substation. A connection of even one second cures the infestation completely. A patient who is not connected to the ground in any way—standing on a fully insulated mat, for example—feels the massive current only as an odd tingling. A patient who is grounded even indirectly is stunned, takes 2D8 damage, and dies from cardiac arrest if reduced to zero hit points.

MRI

The infection can be cured by exposure to an MRI. Magnetic resonance excites protons in the tissues, which release radio waves that can be seen by a scanner. Those radio waves disrupt the microbes' connection to our dimensions. Unfortunately, they take patches of brain matter with them, making the process devastatingly destructive. In Stage 1, the victim loses 1D4 from any one stat determined at random, which costs 0/1 **SAN** from helplessness. In Stage 2, the victim loses 1D8 each from two separate stats determined at random, which costs 1/2D4 **SAN** from helplessness. In Stage 3, the victim dies experiencing visions and sensations of bizarre other realities.

Naming the Disease

The Researcher who identifies the illness as a new disorder gets to name it. Before they isolate it, their bosses refer to it as "the unidentified syndrome" and the doctors on the scene call it "the mystery infection." But once Researchers define the illness, the one who makes the roll that identifies it gets to name it.

Some options to suggest if they get stuck are: A formal Latin name (like *velox febris,* meaning "quick fever," or *divisa caput* meaning "split head"), an acronym (such as RONI for "Rapid Onset Neuralgic Infection" or SCOF for "Sudden Contagious Occipital Fever") or simply a description ("Hudson's Well Syndrome" or "Langzweil's Disease").

Whatever the Researcher names it, that becomes its official, published, formal, acknowledged name. If the players come up with something silly, their boss or some other authority on the scene starts calling it Paulden's Fever. Later, the fact that the Researchers named it can be important. It may prove that this illness did, in fact, travel back in time to infect them.

The Drive to Hudson's Well

The Researchers land in Phoenix at 2:00 p.m. local time, gather their cargo, rent cars, and set out for Hudson's Well. Hudson's Well is a small desert town about 270 km (170 miles) northeast of Phoenix.

A Call from Dr. Marholm

Once they are in vehicles driving to Hudson's Well, the team gets a conference call from their boss, Dr. Marholm.

She has confidence in the team, but she is disturbed at the thought of just how ugly this situation could turn out to be. The speed with which new infections and lethalities have been reported is not good.

This does not look like any known pathogen. Marholm has not heard back from Dr. Strickland since his call. He probably has plenty on his plate at the moment.

Marholm reiterates that the Researchers have four missions.

- Identify the contagion.
- Determine how to treat the contagion.
- Prevent the contagion from spreading. This means studying victims medically, interviewing victims and their loved ones to determine lifestyle patterns, and, if necessary, establishing isolation and quarantine protocols.
- Above all, do no harm. This means protecting themselves from exposure, protecting others from exposure, restricting their treatments to what is necessary, and conducting no experimentation or risky treatments without informed consent.

The Researchers all know Marholm's career is at stake if this turns into a fiasco.

In the role of Marholm, you can introduce the idea that the researchers may have a hard decision to make between two courses.

- **LOCK IT DOWN:** They can treat this as a full-on deadly epidemic and lock down everyone with symptoms. That is the smart play if this really is a killer contagion, but it can backfire horrendously—risking panic, lawsuits, federal investigations, and defunding—if it turns out to be a limited groundwater contamination or the like.
- **KEEP IT CALM:** On the other hand, they can stay calm, prevent terror and looting, and possibly let contagious, asymptomatic carriers ignorantly leave town to carry the epidemic to larger communities like Flagstaff and Tucson. That is the right move if this is containable, but it is potentially a disaster if this really is something from outside the catalog and spreads as quickly and lethally as it appears.

The worst-case scenario is that this is a weaponized disease, the result of a deliberate biological attack. If that's the case, the abstract damage caused by announcing it could be tremendous and might actually not stop future outbreaks, depending on how organized and widespread the attack is.

Finally, Marholm makes sure everyone on the team has her personal phone number. She reassures them that she will answer a call from them, day or night, no matter who might be on the other line. Their job here is her top priority.

About Hudson's Well

Marholm and quick web searches can fill the Researchers in on what to expect on the ground.

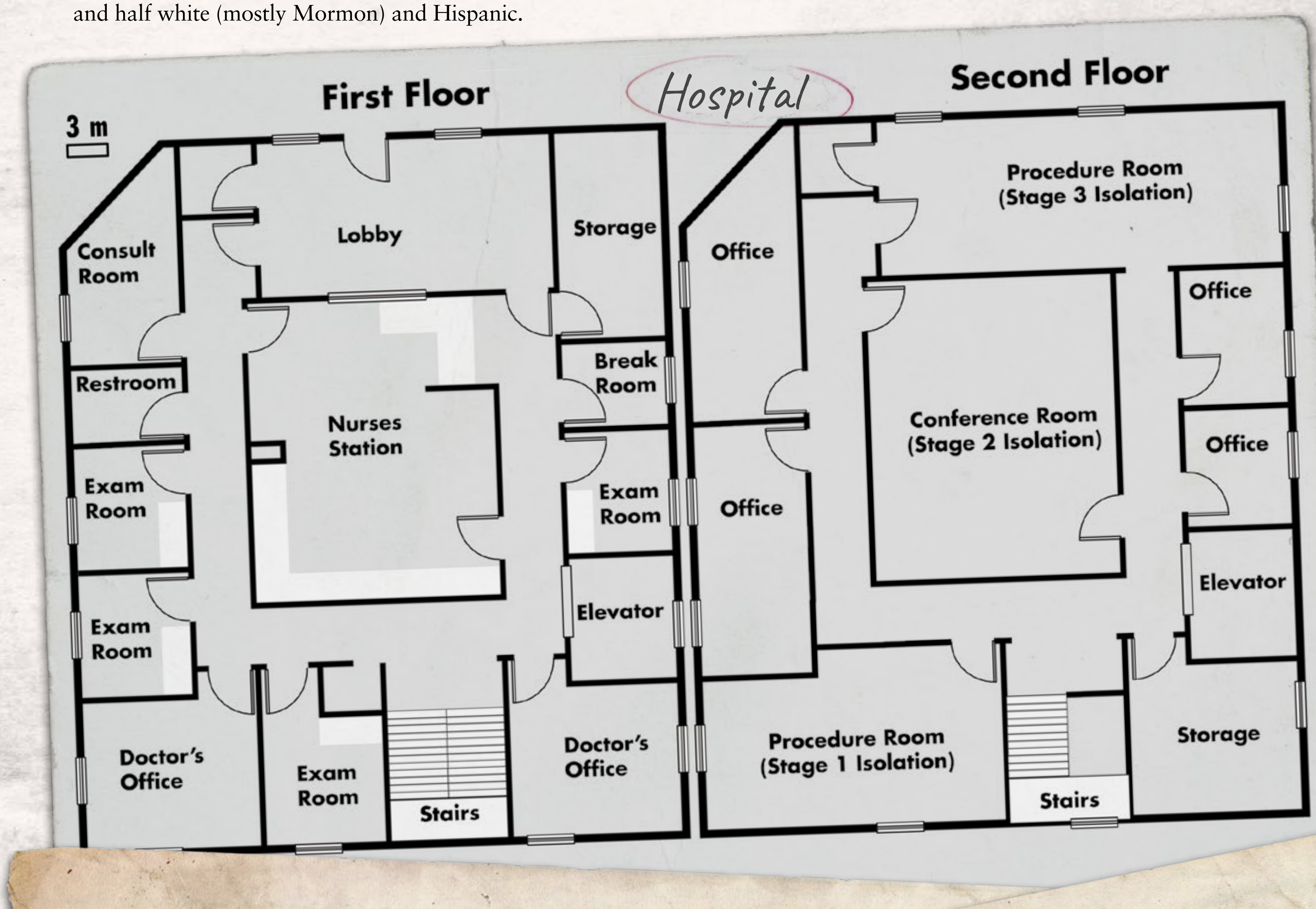
Hudson's Well is a small, quiet, unincorporated town of about 5,000 people. There's some mining in the area, some light industry, and ranching. It is in the middle of Navajo country, and it seems like half the businesses in town have gimmicky Indian-themed names and decor. A community college stands about half a kilometer from the hospital. There's talk about building a huge solar farm to the south. The population is half native American—mainly Navajo and Apache—and half white (mostly Mormon) and Hispanic.

There is no municipal police department, but one county sheriff's deputy is always stationed in town. It has a state trooper station, where one or two troopers at a time work when not on the nearby interstate. Crime rates are pretty low. It is automotive crime, mostly—there was a stolen-car ring in the region until last year—and minor drug activity.

The town grew around a highway. Every way out except the highway is gravel or circuitous. If the Researchers can talk the state and county authorities into closing off the highway, they can shut down the fast vehicular routes.

Official Resources

The county and state are the most immediate sources of manpower. State troopers specialize in handling automotive traffic. County deputies have vehicles to work off-road in the desert around town. Troopers and deputies alike are trained with hazmat suits and decontamination procedures.


Hospital
First Floor
3 m
Consult Room
Lobby
Storage
Restroom
Nurses Station
Break Room
Exam Room
Exam Room
Exam Room
Elevator
Doctor's Office
Exam Room
Stairs
Doctor's Office
Second Floor
Procedure Room (Stage 3 Isolation)
Office
Office
Conference Room (Stage 2 Isolation)
Office
Office
Elevator
Procedure Room (Stage 1 Isolation)
Stairs
Storage

Flagstaff Medical Center, about 150 km west, is the nearest major hospital. Half a dozen doctors and nurses are expected to drive to Hudson's Well to help with the outbreak.

At Hudson's Well

The Researchers arrive at about 5:00 p.m. local time.

Deputy Thomas

The Researchers are met at the hospital by Danica Thomas, a tough sheriff's deputy. She works part of each week out of a tiny office in town and is the Researchers' liaison with the county and state police. Deputy Thomas sticks with the Researchers as long as she can and answers questions about the town.

Thomas knows Hudson's Well like the back of her hand, but all she knows about the current situation is that people are sick at the Catholic Hospital. The people of Hudson's Well have realized that something bad is happening at the hospital. Some have barricaded themselves in their homes. Some are fleeing town. Some are demanding entrance to the hospital. Some are avoiding the hospital despite showing symptoms, because they're afraid.

Thomas particularly wants to know if it's terrorism (and looks skeptical if the researchers reassure her that it is not) and whether she should get a gas mask herself.

Hudson's Well Catholic Hospital

Hudson's Well Catholic Hospital is a hospital in name only. Endowed in 1920 by the gift of a prospector who struck it rich—at least, that was his story for his wealth—it bears the name "Catholic Hospital" as required in the grant but is more a clinic.

On any given day there is likely to be one nurse and one physician on duty. It has a waiting room, not an E.R. It has exam rooms, not a surgical ward. The biggest news in years came a few years back when a massive grant by a mining company funded an MRI machine. The clinic can only afford twice-weekly rounds by a radiologist from out of town, but the machine is its pride and joy.

It has an upper floor that has been used for storage until now; the staff have turned the upstairs into makeshift isolation wards.

Decontamination Line

The hospital recruited a dozen off-duty volunteers from nearby police and fire departments to run a decontamination line outside the hospital. Wearing personal protection equipment, they scrub down workers' HAZMAT suits in wading pools with water and long brushes. They siphon the tainted water into large barrels which are sealed for later disposal and labeled with biohazard stickers.

Patients

Patients with confirmed symptoms are isolated in rooms in the upper floor of the hospital.

ISOLATION—STAGE 1: Craig Amberlin; Orenthal Kimmons; Dylan O'Dell; John Pahabi; Fritz Strickland, M.D.; Luis Tsotsie, R.N.; Tate Willert

ISOLATION—STAGE 2: Aya Chandreskar, M.D.; Harudo Cortez; Richard Ramirez, R.N.

ISOLATION—STAGE 3: Henrietta Cortez; Stephen Embry; Mia Smith, M.D. (Cortez and Smith are heavily sedated and restrained. Even under sedation, they occasionally cry out and struggle against the restraints.)

IN CRISIS: As the Researchers walk in the door, the HAZMAT-suited emergency staff are trying and failing to keep Malouf alive upstairs. Meanwhile, Stephen Embry has just entered Stage 3. Even downstairs, the Researchers can hear Embry screaming incoherently: "the lights…everything, all around…everything is hungry…it's eating us all…it's in my eyes!" If they rush upstairs to help, they find him frantically trying to dig his own eyes out of his head.

The Dead

The dead are stored in a refrigerated truck loaned to the hospital by Holden Meat Packing, a plant outside town. When the Researchers arrive, the dead include Francesca Maurey; Julie Maurey; Liz Maurey; and Maya Paulden, M.D. Amad Malouf will join them shortly. Victims remain infectious for about an hour after death.

Medical Personnel

Hudson's Well Catholic Hospital has a full-time staff of two physicians, one nurse practitioner, and four registered nurses. About the same time that Strickland called for help from the CDC, he called for help from Flagstaff, Arizona, a drive of about an hour and a half.

Some medical personnel have been infected. They are listed in *italics* with their disease stage when the Researchers reach Hudson's Well.

FROM HUDSON'S WELL: By the time the Researchers arrive, four of the hospital's seven full-time staffers are infected and in isolation.

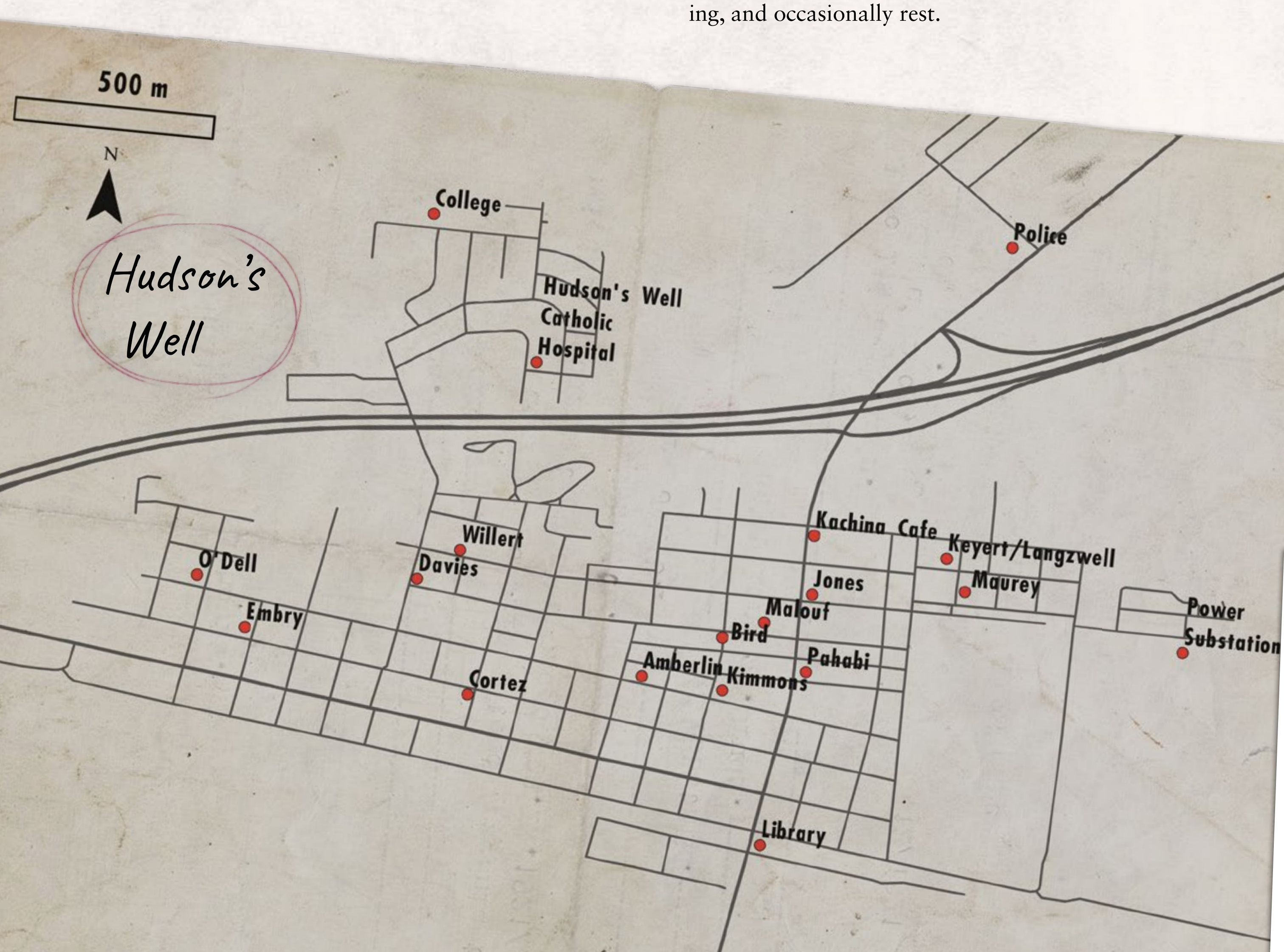
- *Maya Paulden, M.D. (deceased)*
- *Fritz Strickland, M.D. (senior physician; Stage 1)*
- Andrea Cray, N.P. (senior nurse)
- *Richard Ramirez, R.N. (Stage 2)*
- *Mia Smith, R.N. (Stage 3)*
- Isabella Begay, R.N.
- *Luis Tsotsie, R.N. (Stage 1)*

FROM FLAGSTAFF: A team from Flagstaff drove over this morning to assist. With Strickland falling ill, and then other medical staffers, they are harried and frightened. From Flagstaff, Garcia is the senior physician and Donovan is the senior nurse.

- David Abrankovitch, M.D. (radiologist)
- *Aya Chandreskar, M.D. (Stage 2)*
- Angela Garcia, M.D. (senior physician)
- Sophia Anderson, R.N. (at the college observing quarantine)
- Ashley Donovan, R.N. (senior nurse)

Researcher Activities

Once the Researchers land in Phoenix, the clock is ticking. They have to gather and process a vast amount of information, study the epidemiology of the Hudson's Well contagion, study its symptoms and causes, develop a treatment plan, keep it from spreading, and occasionally rest.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N
Hudson's Well
College
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Police
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Amberlin
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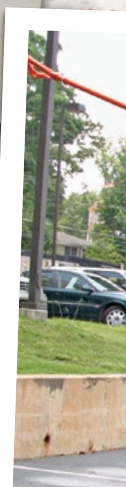
O'Dell
Embry
Willert
Davies
Cortez
Library
Power Substation



Four-Hour Activities

The Researchers' time is divided into four-hour blocks. In each four-hour block, each Researcher can pursue one main action. Of course the Researchers help each other, handle short tasks and crises, take breaks, and so on. But each must choose one key goal for that block of time.

Meanwhile, the contagion progresses. After every four-hour block, tell the players which new patients have appeared and which patients' conditions worsened. The quicker the Researchers move, the fewer people die.

If the players come up with something you hadn't considered, you may have to wing it. If they do not have ideas about what to do, you can suggest some of the following options, or permit each player an **INT** test to think of something. Let them discuss things and figure out what they want to try.

Give the players the **RESEARCH NOTES** handouts on page 110–111. They should use those to track each Researcher's activities. Use a Researcher's initials to indicate who is doing what. Make extra copies of the second sheet and fill in the date as necessary.

Research On the Road

The drive takes about three hours and the vehicles are cramped. Each Researcher has one "block" of time in which to work on the way but at a –20% penalty to each action.

Hospital Timeline

The researchers have a spreadsheet summarizing developments at Hudson's Well up to their morning deployment. Give them the **CONTAGION DEVELOPMENTS** handouts from pages 112–117. They have the first few events filled in. They can fill in further developments as they go. Make extra copies of the blank sheet and fill in its date as necessary.

Rest and Exhaustion

A Researcher who works for 16 hours (four blocks of four hours each) must make a **CON×5** test or lose 1D6 WP and suffer a –20% penalty to all actions. After each subsequent block of work, the Researcher must make a **CON×5** test or lose another 1D6 **WP**.

Drinking plenty of coffee and/or chain-smoking postpones the effects of exhaustion for one four-hour block of time. Taking a prescription-strength stimulant postpones exhaustion for two blocks. A Researcher

Quarantines

Someone exposed to a contagious disease or major health hazard may be quarantined from others who have not been exposed. Quarantines are usually conducted at home or in a hospital to prevent further spread of the illness. Quarantined individuals undergo observation for signs of the illness and receive specialized treatment. Quarantine is much more likely to involve limited numbers of exposed persons in small areas than large numbers of persons in neighborhoods or cities. Any declaration of quarantine outside of a hospital or airport is likely to get at least local media attention. The reasoning, evidence, and methodology for deciding a quarantine needs to be able to hold up to public scrutiny.

In most cases, isolation is voluntary. However, federal, state, and local governments have the authority to require isolation to protect the public. The CDC is notified of nearly all quarantine actions around the country, and makes its specialists available to help determine if quarantine is needed and how to deal with the risk. Whether to institute and enforce a quarantine is a decision that can have dire political consequences for local, county, and state leaders, one way or the other.

The list of diseases for which quarantine or isolation is authorized is specified in an executive order of the President. This list includes cholera, diphtheria, tuberculosis, plague, smallpox, yellow fever, viral hemorrhagic fevers (such as Lassa, Marburg, and Ebola), severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and nasty versions of influenza.

No instance of large-scale quarantine has occurred in the U.S. since the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918.

can take more stimulants to keep going, but every dose after the first costs 1D6 **WP**.

A Researcher who rests for eight hours recovers 1D6 **WP** and resets the clock. A Researcher who rests only four hours may attempt a **CON×5** test to recover 1D6 **WP** and reset the clock.

Helplessness

The Researchers are somewhat inured to bloodshed and seeing physical symptoms. The sweep of ______pathy and the numbers of victims are another matter. In any four-hour block when two or more adults die, or one or more children die, each Researcher loses 0/1 **SAN** from helplessness.

Research & Developments

Processing mounds of data to find something that resembles this fever means a lot of multitasking, not to mention running around between the lab (to check blood work), the makeshift sick wards (to check for new or changed symptoms), the isolation rooms, the cooling truck turned morgue, and interviews with patients and their families.

Contagion Developments

While the Researchers are en route and after they reach Hudson's Well, new patients come in and earlier patients die from their symptoms. These developments are filled out only for the first few days of the outbreak. How many more victims turn up after the Researchers arrive depends on their effectiveness in containing the outbreak; see **ACTIVITIES: CONTAINMENT** on page 90.

The Researchers are instructed to focus their epidemiological research on the initial victims to identify the cause. Beyond the first few days, it is enough to say that more and more victims show up, unless the Researchers have been effective at stopping the illness in town and then tracking down and isolating Thartha, its source.

Trouble in the Hospital

As described under **THE DISEASE** on page 75, victims in Stage 3 often become terrifyingly violent. Punctuate the Researchers' work with unexpected explosions of panic as patients' Stage 3 symptoms become acute:

- Shrieking.
- Fighting their restraints and sometimes breaking free.
- Gouging out their own eyes.
- Piercing their own eardrums with pens or sticks.
- Tearing out their own tongues to stop tastes.
- Attempting suicide by slamming their head into a counter's corner or through a window's glass.
- Attempting to kill anyone who interferes with them.

A Researcher may need to attempt a **DEX×5, STR×5, Dodge,** or **Unarmed Combat** test to avoid having a HAZMAT suit torn by a crazed patient.

An especially disturbing incident may cost witnesses 0/1 or even 0/1D4 **SAN** from helplessness.

Unexpected Infections

Strickland is hardly the only medical staffer to fall ill despite precautions.

Orenthal Kimmons, hospital office administrator, dealt with patients and medical staff from behind a glass window. Even so, he wore gloves and a breath mask. And yet he came down with the disease.

Flagstaff physician David Abrankovitch observed infectious disease protocols scrupulously around patients from his arrival. He worked all shifts from a HAZMAT suit which was never breached, and otherwise remained isolated in the MRI office reviewing symptom reports and conducting research.

Between the unexpected infections, the Researchers themselves possibly becoming infected, and the Researchers' other discoveries, the players may realize that wearing HAZMAT suits offers absolutely no protection. That costs each Researcher 0/1D4 **SAN** from helplessness.

Activities: Researching Victims

Calling Strickland

Before 3:00 p.m., Dr. Strickland answers on the second ring, sounding harried and afraid. He immediately wants to know if the Researchers have identified the disease, and if they haven't, then why the hell are they calling?

Calling Strickland after 3:00 p.m. gets his voice mail, because he has already collapsed. With a great deal of effort, the researchers can get another, even more harried doctor on the line—Angela Garcia, who drove in this morning from Flagstaff—to deliver the same details.

Strickland or Garcia can fill in the following details:

- **MALOUF AND KACHINA CAFÉ:** Strickland says Amad Malouf worked at Kachina Café, a coffee and donut shop. Since his last call to the CDC, Strickland has admitted three patients who bought food or drinks at Kachina Café while Malouf was on duty. The police have shut the place down and are trying to recover records to determine just how many people were served during Malouf's eight-hour shift on 20 NOV 2012.
- **JONES:** There may already be another fatality. An elderly woman named Philippa Jones died at 11:07 a.m. today, the 21st, in an ambulance on her way to the E.R. with a severe fever. Her grandchildren remembered going to the same donut shop with her on 20 NOV 2012. The grandchildren have been quarantined but have not exhibited symptoms.
- **ANTIVIRALS:** Strickland has determined that the antiviral drugs oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza) seem to do no good, so the Researchers can add that to their theories. (Possessing this factoid gives a +20% bonus to treating ______pathy.)
- **QUARANTINE:** They have set up a voluntary quarantine station at the community college gym, only a few hundred meters from the hospital. Victims' family and friends who have not shown signs of infection are asked to go there, where Nurse Sophia Anderson, a volunteer from Flagstaff, keeps track of them and watches for symptoms.

Victim Backgrounds

Hand the players the **HUDSON'S WELL MAP** handout from page 102. Open-source information on the victims is the best way to find patterns to their movements. Any Researcher can find the following information.

Cortez, Harudo and Henrietta

Harudo Cortez is a real estate agent. Henrietta Cortez runs the law firm Cortez & Embry with Steven Embry.

Jones, Philippa

Philippa Jones (age 69) retired nine years ago after teaching college German for years in Tucson. She moved to Hudson's Well where her divorced daughter, Renee Simmons (37) is raising two sons, Davis Simmons (13) and Monroe Simmons (7).

Malouf, Amad

Amad Malouf (age 20) works at Kachina Café, a coffee and donut shop. He went to the University of Arizona for a year but is on academic probation. He lives with his parents, Khalid and Brenda Rudel-Malouf, and his sister Yasmina. He has never been out of the country. The researchers can find a string of social media posts chronicling his dull days of work, movies, and mystery novels. To all appearances, he hasn't left Hudson's Well in the last two months.

Maurey, Elizabeth, Francesca, and Julie

Francesca (11), Elizabeth (9), and Julie (7) Maurey are the daughters of Avram and Ida Maurey. Avram Maurey (age 38) maintains water towers. Ida Maurey (age 35) manages a local radio station.

Studying the Data

A Researcher who tracks the geographic spread of the illness through time can get a sense of its movement, progress and virulence. The players should handle the task themselves with the information they receive, but it occupies a given Researcher's time.

Interviewing Victims and Families

Interviewing the ill, along with their families or other hospital personnel, could help source the disease. Except as noted, these interviews require no rolls, only time and a capacity for empathy. In a four-hour block, a Researcher can conduct two interviews.

EMBRY'S FAMILY: Asked about Henrietta or Harudo Cortez, Steve Embry's wife Emily Embry says he suspected that Henrietta's husband was seeing a guy who had bought a house from him.

JONES' FAMILY: Philippa Jones' daughter Renee Simmons called when Philippa failed to show up to babysit on 21 NOV 2012. Simmons went to Jones' condo when she didn't answer her phone, and found her passed out in a cold tub. Philippa died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. Asked about Jones' activities, Renee says that on 20 NOV 2012, Jones took Simmons' kids to Kachina Café for coffee and donuts.

KACHINA CAFÉ: The owner of Kachina Café shares security video footage if asked. Running close-ups of customers through government or state databases identifies the other customers. None except Malouf and Jones have fallen ill. Some answer phone calls; some of those agree to quarantine themselves at the college. Others promise to stay home. If the Researchers know to look for Jeffrey Langzweil, or if they cross-reference the customers with other contacts, they can identify Langzweil as the customer ahead of Jones in line.

MALOUF'S FAMILY: Malouf's family are absolutely devastated by Amad's illness and by the thought that he might be the vehicle by which dozens of Kachina Café customers die too. He swore he washed his hands frequently at work. If asked whether he served any sick customers, they say Malouf said one customer on 20 NOV 2012 seemed pale, but he did not know the man.

THE MAUREYS: With all three of their little girls dying, Avram and Ida Maurey are shattered and dumbfounded with shock. They cooperate without trouble. They are so traumatized that no new shocks can touch them. If asked about the girls' recent activities, Ida can break through her grief and terror to describe going door to door in the neighborhood with Liz on 20 NOV 2012, soliciting funds for a church pledge drive. There weren't many people home, but one woman who answered the door and signed up looked pale and ill. In fact, Maurey still has the signup sheet in her purse. The sick woman was Rosamund Keyert, who lives three doors down from the Maureys.

The Victims' Belongings

Searching for personal, non-medical clues can be helpful. Treating the victim like a victim or suspect in a crime—checking their possessions, examining their circumstances, going through their phone and wallet and looking for clues—can yield unexpected information.

Harudo Cortez has a partially used package of condoms hidden behind his cell phone in its case. That same phone has suspicious texts (vague flirting, veiled arrangements to rendezvous) to Hudson's Well resident Jefferey Langzweil.

Henrietta Cortez has a receipt from a recently fulfilled prescription for an oral contraceptive.

Researching Keyert and Langzweil

Jeffrey Langzweil retired from a CalTech professorship in theoretical physics in 2010 after 22 years. His doctoral thesis was "Fermionic Transformation as a Supersymmetrical Worldsheet Function." In his last few years at CalTech, he worked on particle physics and "expressions of timespace." He is married to Rosamund Keyert.

Rosamund Keyert was a physics professor at CalTech until 2009. Her dissertation was "Gravitino Detection Using Chronal Topography: A Theoretical Approach." Further information about her is hard to find.

A Researcher can reach out to faculty at CalTech or dig around online to get more background on Keyert. Digging online requires a **Computer Science** or **HUMINT** skill of 50%, or a successful roll. Calling CalTech faculty requires a **Bureaucracy** or **Persuade** test, but it gets a +20% bonus if the Researcher has a physics-related **Science** skill at 50% or higher. The Researcher can get the following information based on what the player asks to investigate.

TEACHING AND RESEARCH: Keyert was not popular with students. She tended to mumble and had a reputation as an inattentive, inept professor. Keyert did some interesting work on the curvature of spacetime. In her last few years at CalTech, she focused on "ghost-particle" emissions: odd, repetitive "pops" in spacetime coming and going at regular and predictable intervals. She suspected these were high-energy particle spikes of a very exotic nature.

WHAT HAPPENED? When Keyert's work failed to earn the support that she thought she deserved, she became more and more outraged. That led to wider ridicule. That in turn sparked more outrageous claims. She complained that some conspiracy between the physics "establishment" and the U.S. military was trying to thwart her work. That made her a laughing stock. She grew more frustrated, more convinced that she was right, and more obsessed with the promise of what she had discovered. She quit CalTech in 2009 and moved home to Hudson's Well. Her husband, Dr. Jeffrey Langzweil, retired from CalTech in good standing and moved with her.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES: On physicist message boards, Keyert came across as obsessed with the so-called Philadelphia Experiment—the purported disappearance and reappearance of the U.S.S. *Eldridge* in 1943, a story long since disproven as a hoax.

Contacts With Keyert or Langzweil

The researchers can interview the victims' families and cross-reference their reports of the victims' activities over the past few days.

Francesca Maurey, Julie Maurey, Henrietta Cortez, and Steven Embry had no direct contacts with Keyert or Langzweil.

CORTEZ AND LANGZWEIL: If the Researchers ask Harudo Cortez about Jeffrey Langzweil or Rosamund Keyert, Harudo Cortez says he sold them their house in 2009. If asked about any other connections, or if told that Langzweil or Keyert is ill, Harudo grows distraught. If asked about an intimate connection, Cortez at first angrily denies cheating on his wife. But if pressed about it with the threat that the contagion poses to the community, or with a successful **Persuade** roll, he admits the truth. After the house deal, Harudo and Jeff Langzweil became friends and, quite secretly on Cortez's part, lovers. By 19 NOV 2012, Cortez had sworn off his ongoing liaison with Langzweil, but they met for a tryst late that night. Langzweil was thrilled by some development in the physics research he did with his wife Rosamund Keyert. Langzweil would not say more about the development. The next morning, Cortez skipped work, feeling sick to his stomach, sick of his affair, and sick of the way his wife fluttered around trying to make him feel better.

JONES AND LANGZWEIL: If shown a photo of Langzweil, Jones' grandchildren recognize him as a man standing in front of them at Kachina Café. Philippa Jones took her grandchildren out for donuts, standing in line behind Langzweil as he ordered coffee. Langzweil infected Jones and Amad Malouf, the clerk behind the counter. Jones' grandchildren, miraculously, escaped harm.

Activities: Symptoms and Treatment

Treating Victims

In this four-hour block of time, a Researcher can work with medical staff to manage symptoms and reduce the progress of the disease. This requires a **Medicine** roll, as described under **TREATMENT** on page 75.

- **FUMBLE:** The Researcher's efforts help no one.
- **FAILURE:** 1 patient does not advance to the next stage of infection.
- **SUCCESS:** 2 patients do not advance to the next stage of infection.
- **CRITICAL SUCCESS:** 4 patients do not advance to the next stage of infection.

Examining Victims

The Researchers are likely to investigate the victims from several different angles, trying to determine how they came by the illness and what effects it is having on them. A doctor who examines one of the patients can roll a **Medicine** test. With a success, the Researcher pieces together that the victims' cerebrospinal fluid tests negative for meningitis. Intravenous and spinal administration of miltefosine (the favored treatment for PAM) and other antibacterials have no effect. That seems to rule out bacterial infection, but the other circumstances rule out viral infections and genetic disorders.

Examining the uneven pupils of a third-stage victim finds the retinas glowing faintly, a dark violet color; in a lens that picks up ultraviolet light, they glow brilliantly. No medical staff have observed this when the Researchers arrive. It lingers an hour after death. **SAN** loss: 0/1 from the unnatural.

Comparing Symptoms

An Agent who gets online and on the phone demanding input and information from various databases, virologists, and research facilities earns a **Bureaucracy**, **Medicine**, or **Science (Biology)** roll.

- **FUMBLE:** The character is exposed. In addition, they get the results of a failure.
- **FAILURE:** Breaking it down, this mystery infection does not fit the profile of any of the usual suspects. It's not Marburg; that has a longer incubation period. Additionally, Marburg doesn't aerosolize, and this apparently does. That rules out Ebola, too. But like them, it might have a non-human reservoir animal, whose bites spread the illness to humans. Cholera can kill with the same speed, but antibiotics would at least slow it down. Some symptoms resemble Dengue Fever, but again, that requires an animal vector, the mosquito. It could just be an especially vicious strain of influenza, but you would think Tamiflu would have at least been a speed bump to it. This looks like something new.
- **SUCCESS:** The rapid onset of debilitating symptoms means that ______pathy is likely to burn itself out before getting the momentum for a real sustained pandemic. But it's crucial to lock down the early-exposed before they create a wave of further infection. Getting it into a truck stop or airport would be particularly bad.
- **CRITICAL SUCCESS:** Even without a cure, you can heavily impede the spread of ______pathy just by telling people to isolate themselves and avoid contact with anyone. If most exposed people show symptoms, that reveals them with minimal contagion. Should the Researchers decide to try to halt the outbreak (as described on page 90), they get +20% to their rolls.

Theorizing About the Symptoms

The neurological symptoms of ______pathy remind the Researchers most of meningitis and primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM, infection by the infamous "brain-eating" amoeba *Naegleria fowleri*), although it lacks their characteristic muscular rigidity, and of course neither of those is this contagious. It also has similarities to prion disorders such as Creutzfeld-Jacob disease, but those are not easily communicable have nowhere near this disease's speed of onset.

Stages of the Disease

The physicians at Hudson's Well have tentatively identified three stages to the infection:

- **STAGE 1:** Fever and weakness.
- **STAGE 2:** Tremors, convulsions, vertigo, disrupted sleep, and loss of control over tears, swallowing, and the bladder.
- **STAGE 3:** Psychosis, including hallucinations, delusions, and violently disorganized self-destructive behavior; only restraints, heavy sedatives, or medically-induced coma preventing them acting out.

In all stages, in some victims the symptoms suddenly fade altogether for a while and then return.

Strickland and Paulden

The Researchers' original contact, Dr. Strickland, is in isolation. Strickland is weak and fading fast from infection and rapid onset of symptoms. He can weakly explain his own situation and catch the researchers up. By 1:00 p.m. he had been on duty four hours and already looked wrung out, tightly wound and sweat-drenched. He did not believe he was infected, just tired and stressed. About 3:00 p.m., he took his own temperature. It registered an even 38 degrees Celsius (101° Fahrenheit). He realized he had been exposed and infected. He put himself in isolation and warned the rest of the staff to watch themselves. Whatever the disease is, it is highly contagious. He had worn gloves and taken reasonable precautions.

Before Strickland discovered his own infection, he and Abrankovitch, a radiologist from Flagstaff, put Dr. Paulden in an MRI. They hoped they could isolate and identify the cerebral damage. It was 1:40 p.m. Strickland or Abrankovitch can describe what happened. The Researchers can also review the MRI scans and a video recording of the patient in the scanner.

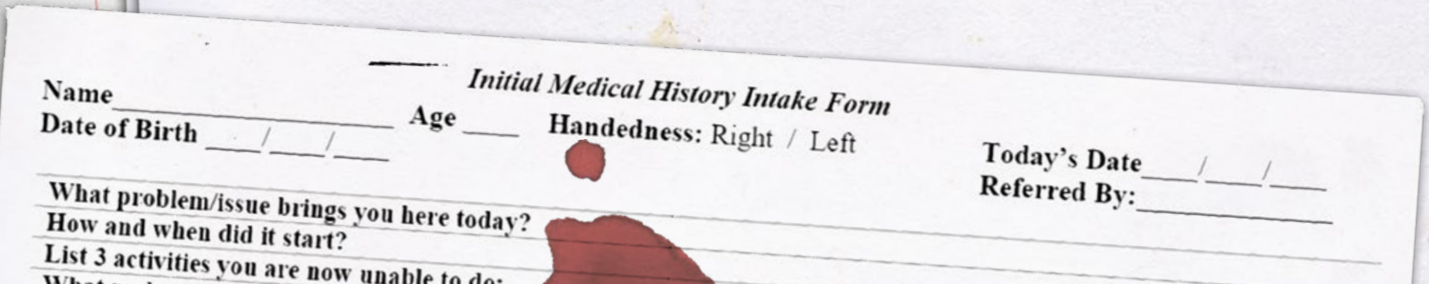
In the recording, as the magnetic field spins up, Paulden grows increasingly agitated. She shrieks, "Black things…into the sky!" She gibbers mindlessly, sags into unconsciousness, and dies even as Abrankovitch is frantically powering down the scanner.

In the MRI images, holes can be seen to form in the patient's medulla and brainstem, especially the pons, before and after death.

They did not attempt another brain scan after that. The doctors have no hint of an explanation. The machine was serviced only a month ago and has never malfunctioned.

Radiology

After the shocking effects of the MRI, the hospital has not attempted a CT scan of a victim. They agree to it if the CDC Researchers press for one and convince a patient or next of kin to submit to it, or if a Researcher submits to it. The X-rays of a CT scan do not have the same spectacular effects on the infestation as the magnetic fields of an MRI. The scan shows lesions in the medulla oblongata and brainstem, particularly the pons.



Initial Medical History Intake Form

Name_______________ **Age** ___ **Handedness:** Right / Left

Date of Birth ___/___/___

Today's Date___/___/___

Referred By:______________

What problem/issue brings you here today?

How and when did it start?

List 3 activities you are now unable to do:

A Theory of Treatment

A Researcher tries to develop a theory of treatment that goes beyond "stop the symptoms and keep them comfortable." The Researcher makes a **Medicine** test. If the group is helping with this, and there are at least three others with **Medicine** at 50% or higher, the roll gets a +20% bonus. People outside the team—the hospital's nurses, pathologists, lab techs, and doctors—cannot add to this roll. They're either too busy or not trained in the team's protocols and techniques.

- **FUMBLE:** The results of a standard failure apply, but the Agent is exposed. Also, all who helped must make **Luck** rolls. If any of those fail, the highest failing roll also is exposed.
- **FAILURE:** You are no closer to finding a treatment to this disease than you were when you went to bed last night.
- **SUCCESS:** What about M2 ion channel inhibitors? The antiviral drugs amantadine and rimantadine block viruses from taking over the host cell. Their use is largely discontinued because the M2 gene mutates so often, leading viruses to form resistant strains—but if this disease is completely new, it probably hasn't had time to acquire those resistances. It is the most promising course anyone has developed. It does not work.
- **CRITICAL SUCCESS:** As with a success, but the number of hours required is halved (round up).

Examining the Infection

The Researchers are almost certain to do labwork, taking blood and tissue samples from the living and the dead, and then running them through every test they can get their hands on.

That requires a series of **Medicine** and **Science (Biology** or **Microbiology)** tests. Each discovery takes 4 hours with a successful roll, 2 with a critical, 8 with a failure, or 12 with a fumble.

- **DISCOVERY 1:** You find that physical samples from the brain of a deceased victim show unknown microbes. In appearance they most closely resemble ctenophores, with gelatinous bodies and cilia or tendrils; but being composed of only a few cells they are far smaller than ctenophores or any kind of jellyfish. They are multicellular, unlike amoeba. What they are, you have no idea.
- **DISCOVERY 2:** None of the microbes look exactly alike—they appear to be not a single invasive species but a colony of countless distinct species.
- **DISCOVERY 3:** The microbes appear to be attracted to electrical signals between nerve cells and to disrupt electrical signals in the brainstem. That disruption becomes more pronounced and physically damaging as the disease progresses.
- **DISCOVERY 4:** After the death of the host, from time to time one of the microbes darts at another as if to devour it, and the other simply vanishes. Recorded at high enough resolution and speed, the vanishing can be seen to leave a brief cavitation where its gelatinous body was before. One microbe does not exactly devour another; both are simply, instantly gone.
- **DISCOVERY 5:** Occasionally, a microbe vanishes, leaving a cavity behind—and then suddenly appears elsewhere, recognizable by its unique shape and movements.
- **DISCOVERY 6:** Doing a thorough exam of a victim's nervous system, you find a microbe which had vanished, now somehow in the nerves of the patient's spinal column, nearly a meter away from where it disappeared.
- **DISCOVERY 7:** The Researcher examines a brainstem sample 12 or more hours after death. None of the strange microbes remain.

Confirming the weird actions of the microbes costs the Researcher 0/1 **SAN** from the unnatural.

Activities: Other Events

The Brown-Out

Eastern Hudson's Well suffered a brownout around lunchtime on Monday, 19 NOV 2012. An announcement from Arizona Electrical Services explained it as a substation power fluctuation. Service was restored that evening. A call to Arizona Electrical Services can get the time of the fluctuation (11:13 a.m.) and the location of the substation (a few blocks from the Keyert house, if the Researchers plot it on a map). That is all that can be learned by phone.

Investigating the Brown-Out

Researchers who contact Arizona Electrical Services can arrange for a representative to show them the power substation that went down at 11:13 a.m. on 19 NOV 2012. The appointment will be 1D6+6 business hours, and will take place only between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., so it could take a day or two.

The representative, Adrian Johnson, has a thick mustache and wears a cowboy hat when not in a hardhat. He hands out hardhats and protective gloves, unlocks the substation gate, and walks the Researchers inside, warning them to keep their hands to themselves. Johnson assumes that the Researchers know nothing about his trade and are just there to tick off a box on paperwork, so he gives them a friendly but cursory tour that tells them nothing they did not already know.

Any Researcher who is inside the substation and who has been infected with ______pathy for more than an hour can attempt an **Alertness** test. If it succeeds, the Researcher finds some of the most acute symptoms—such as headache, nausea, and sensory-motor impairments—somewhat relieved. The closer an infected Researchers get to the high-capacity transmission lines that bring power into the substation, the better they feel. Those symptoms return a few minutes after leaving the substation. Returning to the substation, they fade slightly again.

If the Researchers press Johnson for details about the reason for the power fluctuation, he says usually that happens at the substation itself, due to a mechanical or electrical error bringing in the huge amounts of power from the cross-country transmission lines. In this case, the surge started outside the substation and traveled in, probably due to a lightning strike.

If they ask whether he or any crews saw signs of a lightning strike in Hudson's Well, he says no, but doesn't think much of it. Lighting hits the ground all the time.

If they press him further, he grudgingly agrees to follow the line where the surge came in, looking up at taps and drums on the power poles. The drum on the pole outside the Keyert house shows clear scorching, far beyond anything else in the area. Johnson says that must be where the lightning hit. Lucky it did not take the pole itself down. But lightning is crazy. Since officials are with him, he takes a few minutes to put on protective gear and climb the pole to inspect the drum. He comes down and says everything is intact despite the surge. That is the extent of his interest in the power outage.

Activities: Containment

It's not enough to investigate the illness. The Researchers also have to keep it from spreading. This is the mission's essential purpose. Once the Researchers have some kind of grip on the situation, they can attempt to control the area to prevent ______pathy from spreading beyond their control.

They can do that by earning containment points. It's best to keep track of containment points privately, without telling the players. If the Researchers earn one, say the effort has begun, or at most that it seems to be working. They probably will not learn the ultimate result until the operation ends. (See **AFTERMATH** on page 98.)

There are essentially four approaches they can take. Suggest one possibility if they ask, but don't describe all unless they're already thinking along similar lines.

If they think of anything else that sounds plausible, let them roll for it. What skill or stat they use depends on the task, as described below.

- **FUMBLE:** 0 containment points.
- **FAILURE:** 1 containment point.
- **SUCCESS:** 2 containment points.
- **CRITICAL SUCCESS:** 3 containment points.

As described in **RESEARCHER ACTIVITIES** on page 80, each activity by a Researcher occupies a four-hour block of time.

How many containment points did the Researchers accumulate? That determines how far the disease spreads. The Researchers will find out soon enough. See **AFTERMATH** on page 98.

Calling the Governor

The Researchers can ask the state governor, Sara Simonson to set up road blocks and put choppers and planes in the air. If this works, the governor deploys the state police, bottles up Hudson's Well with roadblocks, orders all planes from the airstrip to return to their point of origin, and intercepts anyone traveling away from it overland. Calling out the National Guard is also the governor's job, but governors do not get elected on the strength of their grasp of unnatural microbiology. There's only so far she will go.

Whoever makes the call attempts a **Bureaucracy, Law,** or **Persuade** test. If the Researcher thinks to text the governor a photo of the dead Maury sisters, the Researcher can try a **CHA×5** test instead, if that's better.

- **FUMBLE:** The governor is not very responsive. If the Researcher pushes, it sparks political backlash and may get the Researcher fired. See **PROSECUTION AND FIRING** in the *Agent's Handbook* for details. No containment points.
- **FAILURE:** The governor reluctantly rolls out a limp and anemic set of roadblocks, but refuses to mobilize the National Guard. There's an election coming, after all. Containment goes up 1 point.
- **SUCCESS:** The governor sounds spooked. Roadblocks are going into effect double quick, and the Air National Guard is being sent out to watch until the blocks are in place. Containment goes up 2 points.
- **CRITICAL SUCCESS:** Not only the Air National Guard, but ground troops are rolling out in APCs to patrol the perimeter of the quarantine zone, along with every state trooper available. Containment goes up 3 points.

Quarantining the City

This requires a **Bureaucracy** or **Law** test directed at the county sheriff, 43-year-old Darren Romo. The request means a serious political risk for the sheriff, who holds an elected position. That incurs a −20% penalty, unless Deputy Thomas has grasped what's happening and helps make the pitch.

- **FUMBLE:** The sheriff is offended and panicky. He issues very vague and final-sounding orders for deputies to stop anyone trying to leave town at all costs. This results in two deaths, and a lot of other people circumventing the roadblock. No containment points.
- **FAILURE:** The sheriff agrees, but has little idea how to carry this out, and cannot understand or execute whatever practical suggestions the Researcher offers. A lot of people get the message, especially after the deputies start going door to door, but that does expose a couple of deputies, who then expose a few more folks. Add 1 containment point.
- **SUCCESS:** The Researchers and sheriff sketch out a quarantine plan and immediately put it into effect. Trucks from the volunteer fire department block the major thoroughfares while deputies' cruisers head to the major intersections to redirect people back home. Ambulances and rescue trucks pick up and isolate the definitely-infected, and take the possibly-exposed to individual locations for testing and observation. Add 2 containment points.
- **CRITICAL SUCCESS:** It's a model of efficiency. The sheriff listens closely and has some excellent suggestions of his own. Add 3 containment points.

Directly Appealing to the Public

The Researchers can activate the Emergency Broadcast System, going on TV and radio themselves to warn people directly. This requires a **Persuade** roll, with a +20% bonus if the speaking Agent has a **CHA** score of 15 or higher. If the Researchers have someone else make the appeal, it calls for a **Luck** roll instead. If they go door to door rather than going on mass media, the roll is at a −20% penalty.

- **FUMBLE:** The messages create as much panic as they relieve. No containment points.
- **FAILURE:** Some people hunker down, but a few run for it, and a few mob the hospital despite efforts to turn them away. But it's marginally better than doing nothing. Add 1 containment point.
- **SUCCESS:** The Researcher comes across as serious but also concerned and intelligent. They explain without sounding condescending or too technical. They calm people without sugar-coating anything so much that folks dismiss it. Add 2 containment points.
- **CRITICAL SUCCESS:** In addition to the benefits of a success, the Researchers get the Wireless Emergency Alert system to text-message everyone in the area with instructions to take cover and report any symptoms. (WEA is supposed to be for weather only, but the local National Weather Service functionary decides to take the bull by the horns.) Add 3 containment points.

Saving Lives

This is covered by **ACTIVITIES: SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT,** on page 86. If the Researchers move swiftly and prevent deaths among hospital patients, they can improve overall containment. The number of containment points depends on the number of patients who die by 5:00 p.m. on 22 NOV 2012.

- **20 OR MORE HOSPITAL DEATHS:** No containment points.
- **16–19 HOSPITAL DEATHS:** Add 1 containment point.
- **12–15 HOSPITAL DEATHS:** Add 2 containment points.
- **11 OR FEWER HOSPITAL DEATHS:** Add 3 containment points.

The FBI

Late Thursday night, 22 NOV 2012 (or even very late Wednesday, if the Researchers make very quick progress), two FBI agents drive into town. They flash badges and inform everyone that this is now a restricted federal investigation of a suspected terrorist bioweapon attack.

They are Special Agent Nell Buchard and Special Agent Bradley Stusser. They are from the Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate, Investigations and Operations Section (IOS), WMD Operations Unit.

They take possession of all records, paper and digital, instruct all medical staff to discuss nothing about this outbreak with anyone else, and instruct them to report to the agents anyone who asks for details about the outbreak. They ask the hospital and the Researchers to provide detailed breakdowns of their schedules and activities.

Buchard and Stusser are deadly serious and secretive. They spend virtually no time explaining themselves.

The FBI agents have their own HAZMAT suits and other biohazard supplies in a black SUV. Unusually, they also have a pair of tactical shotguns with trigger guards filed entirely away so they can be fired with thick gloves.

Investigating the Agents

The Researchers can learn surprisingly little about Buchard and Stusser by calling around.

- **CALLING THE NEAREST FBI OFFICE:** The FBI's Flagstaff resident agency office knows nothing about it. They say to call the Phoenix office.
- **CALLING PHOENIX:** One agent in Phoenix is the FBI office's WMD field coordinator, which makes her point agent on any suspected WMD incident in the district. She says she does not know details about the Hudson's Well incident, and seems annoyed with the whole thing. Getting more information requires a **Bureaucracy** or **Law** test. In that case, she says that FBI headquarters in Washington overrode the usual procedure and send two agents from Washington.
- **CALLING WASHINGTON:** The assistant director's office in the WMD Directorate says that details of the assignment of Buchard and Stusser are classified. No arguments or threats get anywhere.

Naming _____pathy

From **EXAMINING THE INFECTION** (page 88), it seems that the mystery microbes disrupt electrical signals in the brainstem and cause physical damage that results in cerebral hemorrhage. The researcher who makes the discovery has the honor of naming this disease; see **NAMING THE DISEASE** on page 77. A crucial plot turn hinges on the Researchers naming the disease, so emphasize the moment. Encourage the players to erase "_____pathy" in their notes and replace it with the official name of the disease.

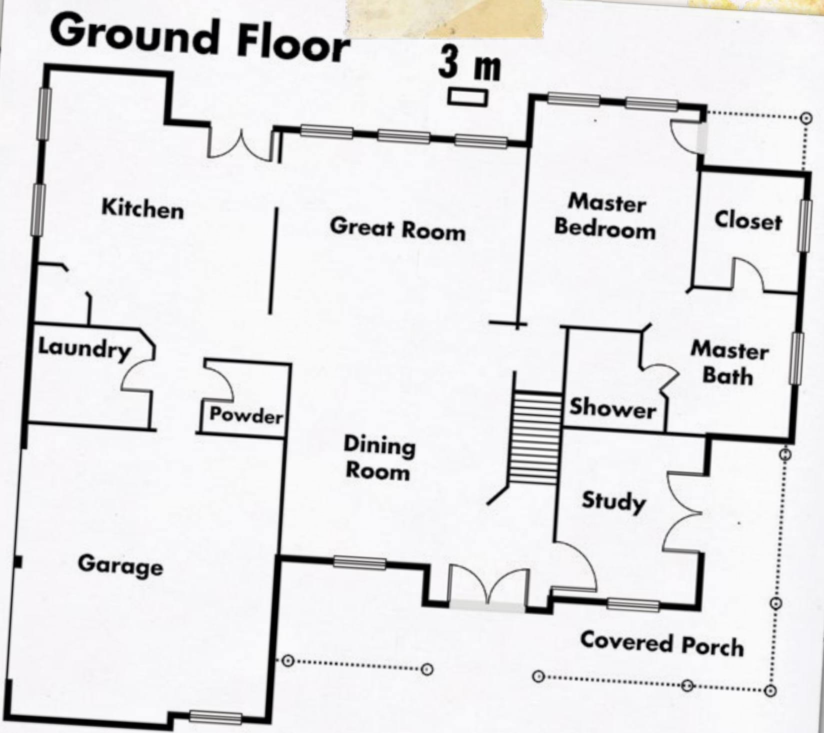
Behind the Scenes

Buchard and Stusser are Delta Green agents sent by the Program to contain what looks like an unnatural incursion. At first, they rely heavily on the Researchers to learn the lay of the land, determine how to keep the incursion from spreading, and find and destroy its source.

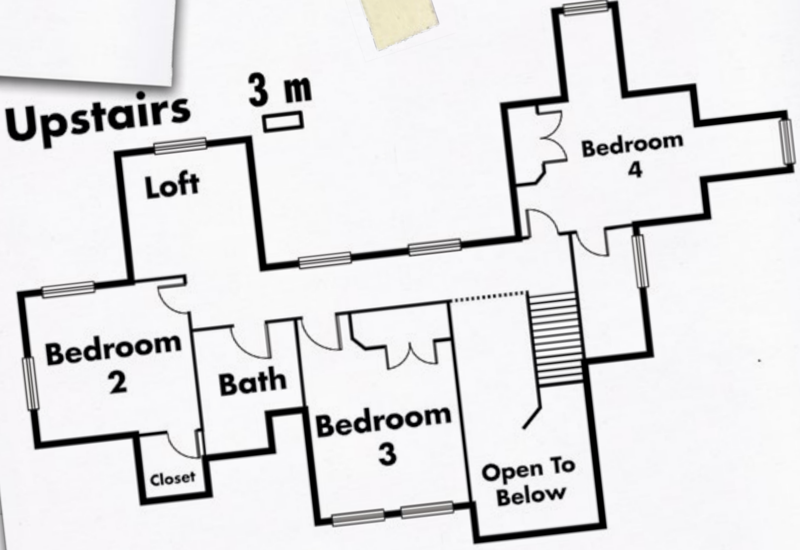
The agents intend to order the Researchers to go back to work at the hospital as soon as they think their mission will require lawbreaking. But they have no way to predict that with any accuracy, and it is more likely that the Researchers will be there when and if the agents come face to face with Keyert's lab and the fugitive Thartha. They intend to send the Researchers away before they burn Keyert's lab and house to the ground or murder and bury Thartha.

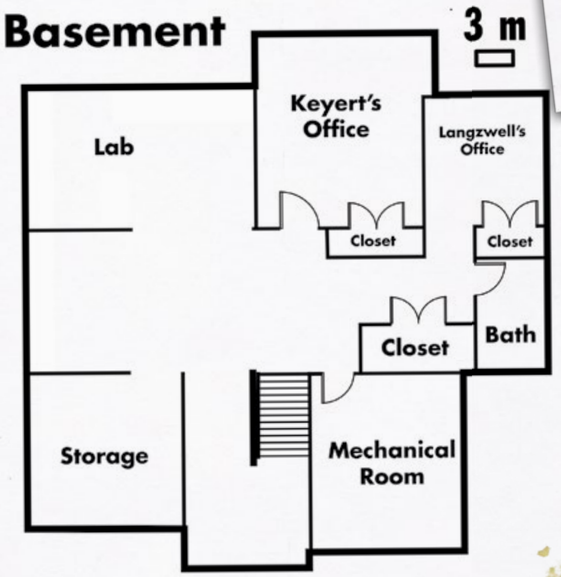
The Physicists' House

Rosamund Keyert and Jeffrey Langzweil lived in a suburban house that was too large for them. They bought it for the expansive basement. Many rooms are used only for storage of things that the scientists accumulated over lifetimes of academic and high-tech hoarding. Countless books, journals, old computer parts, and scraps are stacked like the walls of mazes.


Ground Floor
3 m
Kitchen
Great Room
Master Bedroom
Closet
Laundry
Powder
Master Bath
Shower
Dining Room
Study
Garage
Covered Porch

KEYERT AND LANGZWEIL HOUSE


Upstairs
3 m
Loft
Bedroom 4
Bedroom 2
Bath
Bedroom 3
Closet
Open To Below


Basement
3 m
Keyert's Office
Langzwell's Office
Lab
Closet
Closet
Closet
Bath
Storage
Mechanical Room

The door from the kitchen to the basement is well locked, but it can be opened with a **Craft** (**Locksmithing**) roll, a **DEX×5** roll with special training with lockpicks, or a **STR×5** roll using a crowbar. Locksmithing or lockpicking can be attempted only once. Failing the **STR×5** test gets the door open but costs 1 **WP** or inflicts 1 point of damage from the strain, whichever the player prefers. A fumble tears a HAZMAT suit without opening the door.

Much of the basement is taken up by the lab. Keyert and Langzweil used smaller rooms for storage and for their personal offices.

If Buchard and Stusser hear enough about Keyert and Langzweil to suspect them, they go into the house armed. Buchard's shotgun is loaded with shot, Stusser's with slugs.

The Lab

The lab has tables along the back and rightmost walls, covered with partly- disassembled exotic devices. A Geiger counter registers unusually high levels of radioactive material, mainly americium-241 and thorium-232, used to power the machine.

Occupying most of the left wall is a metal machine with a round aperture in the middle, numerous wires, lenses, antennae and probes pointing at it, along with a camera. It is a series of high-energy coils, a capacitor, and ultraviolet lasers whose purpose was to redouble and amplify the odd signals she had detected in spacetime.

The aperture is clearly damaged, with much of its delicate instrumentation thrust out of the way, as if something forced its way outward from the wall behind. Something projected a great deal of force outward from the aperture. Behind the machine is an unblemished wall, to which it is attached. The damage to the device is clearly more recent than its connection to the wall—the edges of the broken metal are still shiny, while the screws in the wall have a tiny bit of grime on them.

The machines around it include a UV laser and a UV beam detector, as well as very sensitive electromagnetic and gravitic sensors. The laser and the UV detector are fixed facing one another, aligned so that the beam would pass right through the area that all the machinery seems to be directed around. It's clear that the machine was built to handle heavy power draws.

If seen in dim light or darkness, the machine faintly glows a sickly, violet color. A Researcher who closely examines the glowing lab machinery must make a **Luck** roll or be exposed to ______pathy.

The machine no longer works. Key metallic pieces have disappeared since Thartha's appearance. Even figuring out what's missing would take days or weeks.

Keyert's Office

Keyert's office has a computer, a wall lined with physics texts and strange, wriggling tubes of stone. (Anyone with **Science** (**Geology**) recognizes them as fulgurites, formed when lightning strikes sand. They have nothing to do with Keyert's work, she just thinks they're neat.) There's a cabinet and, surprisingly, an electric typewriter. Inside the cabinet are lab reports that were clearly (judging by the way the letters are pressed into the page, with occasional corrections using blobs of white material) typed, rather than printed out. They are completely incomprehensible to anyone without **Science** (**Physics**) skill of 70% or higher.

There are clues to be found here. A **Search** roll is available for anyone who tosses the lab.

Keyert's office has a charger for a smartphone but the phone is missing.

KEYERT'S BODY: Keyert died of a massive overdose of the oxycodone that Langzweil had left over after breaking his foot in a fall in 2010. She was in stage 2 of ______pathy, had just seen Langzweil die, and did not intend to suffer the same fate.

THE TYPEWRITER: The last sheet that Keyert was typing still rests in the typewriter. Give the players the **KEYERT'S NOTE** handout from page 103.

FILE CABINET: Keyert's filing cabinet isn't locked, and the files inside can, after perusal, provide insights via **Science** (**Physics**). A Researcher with skill lower than 40% and who fails a skill test can tell only that Keyert was trying to poke at some weirdness in spacetime. For months, the couple has toiled in grueling hours, following each uptick in the UV sensor of a phantom signal and attempting to "boost" it. A Researcher with skill of

40% or higher or who succeeds at a skill test discerns that the work has something to do with dimensional topography—using high-energy, phased Bosonic particles to distort the shape of space. If it worked, she theorized, two non-simultaneous events could be causally connected. This was an attempt to amplify strange particles that seemed to appear at timed intervals. Her last experiment did more, though she did not know why—it opened a hole in spacetime. The aperture she made was tiny, only a bit bigger than the wavelength of a light beam, and meant to stay open for only .0000000000008 seconds.

TRASH: In the trash can is a piece of paper with a pizza place's phone number jotted on it, but on the other side there's a doodle showing the TARDIS from *Doctor Who* moving in a loop. (See page 104.) At the point where the loop crosses, there's a label saying "here and you can't go farther back than this point, no matter what." A Researcher finds it if the player specifies looking in the trash or makes a **Search** roll.

NOTEPAD: On a yellow legal pad, Keyert scrawled her suspicion that a living time-traveler fed a supermassive power surge into her signal experiment in order to widen it and keep it open long enough to come through. What this person could want is beyond her imagining. She speculates that this could be, in one sense, the end of "free will" as a meaningful concept. Keyert estimated that the wormhole had stayed open for 2.21 seconds and had stretched to 1.17 m in width. Her rough calculations estimated the power requirements at 22 billion petawatts, a bit less than a tenth of the total output of the sun. She had no idea how that could even be vaguely possible. Notes farther down are scrawled hurriedly: "STEEL CHAIR CHARGED, VIOL GLOW, VANISHED. ALUM HOUSING NOT CHARGED—NONFERROUS? SAME FRQ AS ELDRIDGE??" and "HIGH VOLTAGE, GLOW FADE?"

Give the players the **KEYERT'S MEMO** handout from page 105.

Langzweil's Office

Langzweil did not share his wife's hangups about using computers. He has a powerful desktop machine with advanced physics and multimedia applications. The computer controlled the powerful lab equipment.

The Scientists' Secrets

The home of Keyert and Langzweil holds a number of clues that could lead the Researchers to deep secrets of MAJESTIC and Delta Green. The Handler can launch new operations with those clues, using the history of Project RAINBOW found in the *Handler's Guide* and *Delta Green: Eyes Only.*

LANGZWEIL'S BODY: Jeffrey Langzweil lies on the floor of his office, arranged carefully and respectfully. He is clearly dead. He shows signs of acute infection by ______pathy, including what appear to be self-inflicted wounds to his eyes and face. But he died from a broken neck. A Researcher who examines his neck and succeeds at a **Forensics** or **Medicine** test finds bruising that looks like the fingers of an enormous hand, perhaps a hand the size of a great ape's. He died about 1:00 a.m. on 21 NOV 2012.

LANGZWEIL'S TABLET: Langzweil's tablet computer is not password protected. Most of its space is occupied by digital books and journals: *Applied Physics Letters, The Journal of Mathematical Physics, Physical Review, Nuclear Instruments and Methods in Physics Research*, and *Classical and Quantum Gravity.* There are also two issues of the *International Journal of Computer and Telecommunications Networking,* but they're over a year old. Unusually, he also has a collection of fringe materials more suitable for a conspiracy theorist than a scientist. Some are lurid "histories" of the "Philadelphia Experiment," the supposed cover-up of a sci-fi-sounding catastrophe on the USS *Eldridge* in Chesapeake Bay in late October, 1943. (A quick web search finds that the *Eldridge* was on a shakedown cruise in the Bahamas at the time.) He has also collected scans of old newspapers from the 1940s onward, mostly dealing with sailors assigned to the *Eldridge* in 1943 and 1944.

VIDEO FILES: Langzweil's computer holds the video file of Thartha's arrival (see **THARTHA VIDEO** on page 106) and an interview with her (see **THARTHA INTERVIEW** on page 107).

LAB APPLICATIONS: A custom program in Keyert's computer controlled the UV laser in the lab. It fired in an inexplicable numeric pattern at timed intervals.

SEARCH HISTORY: Langzweil spent most of his time online researching his physics interests. But after spending an hour reviewing his history, the Researcher finds a number of purchases of the personal effects of dead sailors who served in World War II.

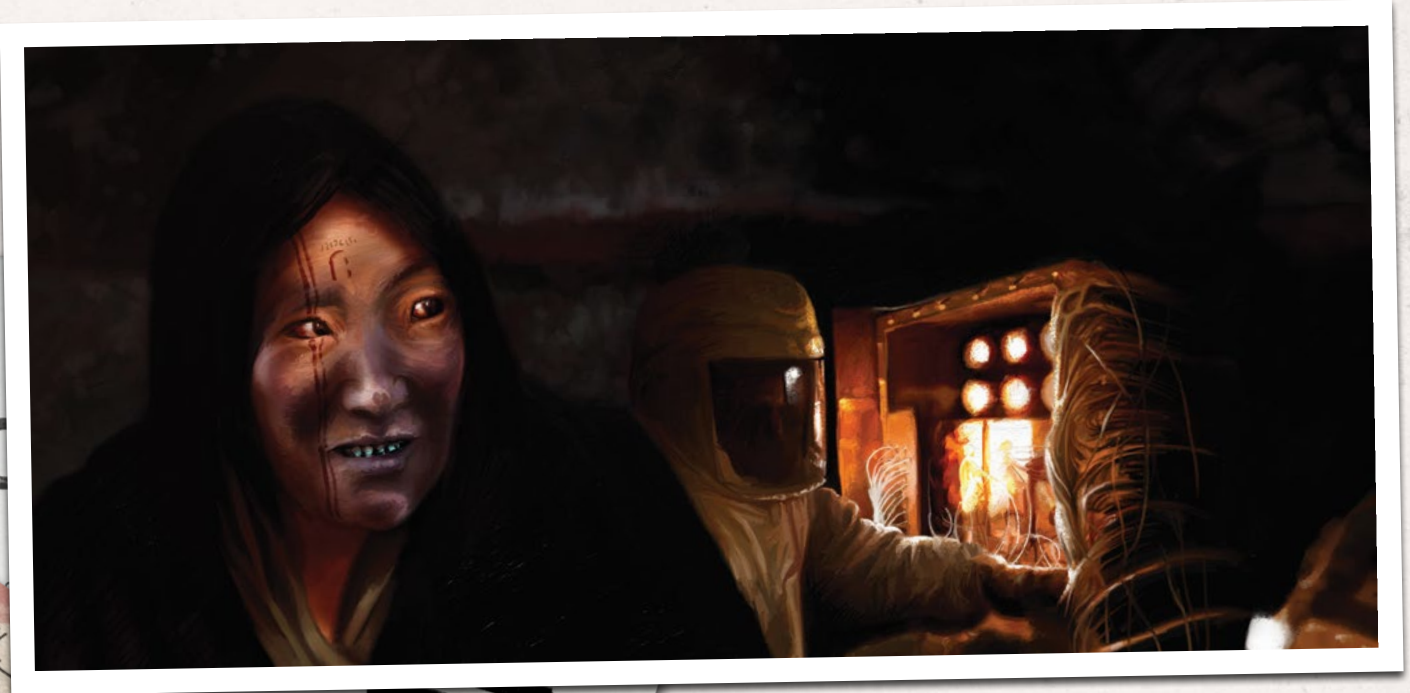
THE ENVELOPE: In a photo frame on the wall is an old envelope addressed to "Peggy Connelly" of Chesapeake, Virginia. The return address is "Cdr Jos. Connelly, USS Eldridge (DE-173), U.S. Navy." The postmark is 15 OCT 1942. The envelope is empty. A Researcher who looks for details on Connelly, and who either has **History** at 40% or higher or succeeds at a roll, finds a USN Captain Joseph M. Connelly. He was best known as executive officer of the carrier USS *Enterprise* in the late 1960s and briefly its captain in the early 1970s. He died at age 69 in 1974. His wife Peggy died in 2011 at age 88. Their children sold many of their mementos online.

THE CYLINDER: On a shelf is an old, well-worn, cylindrical cardboard container, about 16 cm long and 10 cm across. It bears the Dictaphone logo and with a hand-written label: "Ens. Yesler, T., 3 Apr. 43." Inside is a wax cylinder, about 6" long and 3" across, that can be played on a Dictaphone machine. A sound engineer with equipment capable of playing the recording on the wax cylinder can be found in Phoenix or Atlanta. The recording is about 6 minutes long and is so garbled with age and damage as to be nearly indecipherable. There seem to be two interviewers and one interview subject. About four minutes in, listeners hear a miraculously clear patch. The interview subject, who sounds like a young man with a Brooklyn accent, is audibly weeping and yelling: "—was right in the hull, and those worm things floating all around in the air! Went right through me like I wasn't there and latched on to Finny like leeches. Jesus, Finny. Jesus. Jesus. What th—" Nothing more can be understood or reconstructed.

Thartha

The Researchers should encounter Thartha only after they search the lab and offices. If they go straight to the basement, they can hear Thartha moving around upstairs. If they search upstairs first, she is in the basement. They may hear her hiding in a storage room not yet searched, or in a crawlspace on the other side of a basement wall.

Thartha stands 2.3 m tall and weighs about 120 kg. She has almond-shaped brown eyes, brown hair in a braid, and dark tan skin. Her features are angular, with high cheek-bones, a pointed chin, and a straight, long nose with narrow nostrils. Her proportions are normal—she appears to be just a regular woman who's extraordinarily tall. She wears a fitted gray coverall that seems to be of cotton canvas, and no jewelry or ornamentation. Her feet are bare and leathery.



Thartha knows that she is responsible for the disease that infected Keyert and Langzweil, and suspects that Langzweil spread it to the outside world. Thartha means to sneak away by night and find a way to survive, but she has not yet steeled her courage for it.

She also fears that strangers who come to the house, particularly if they wear HAZMAT suits, will conclude that she is responsible for the contagion. If they corner her in the house—she is not stealthy—she attacks with her bare hands, meaning to disable or stun an Agent long enough to escape, even if she must flee into the light of day.

Any character in unarmed combat with Thartha must make a **Luck** roll or contract ______pathy.

Buchard and Stusser try to kill Thartha on sight, unless they are in public. In that case, they pursue her someplace private to do it.

If Thartha escapes the house, Buchard and Stusser take immediate steps to keep word of her from getting out. Then they go on the hunt, leaving the Researchers to contain the outbreak.

Examining Thartha's Corpse

The thick canvas of Thartha's coveralls thins as it's handled—it takes little experimentation to realize it's temperature sensitive, becoming puffy and fluffy when cold, thin and loose-woven when warm. Her underwear is snug, unremarkable, close-fitting gray stuff: It doesn't change texture like her jumpsuit. It's your basic sports-bra and undershorts.

Her proportions are well within standard norms and she has no signs of acromegaly. Her amazonian stature doesn't appear to be the result of Marfan syndrome or pituitary gigantism.

Her hands are rough, like the hands of someone accustomed to labor. The soles of her feet are extremely leathery, as if she's walked barefoot outside and in, all her life. Her feet are strange. The big toe separates from the bulk of the foot much higher than usual, and seems to have a highly developed joint—as if it's partially prehensile.

The nails of her strange feet curl under her toes and are clearly very thick and tough.

She does not appear to have shaved. Her face bears distinctive tattooed lines, but there are no signs that she ever had pierced ears and no tan lines from rings. There are no scars or birth marks on her body.

Her teeth don't have the roughness of typical adult teeth. Though they're full sized, they're like baby teeth. There are no fillings, and her bottom frontmost left tooth is visibly whiter than the rest, as is her left upper incisor.

'______PATHY 2.17.25'

Thartha has inoculation dates tattooed on the underside of her left bicep: The top three are in an unfamiliar alphabet that seems distantly related to English. Most words are gibberish, but the last word is clearly: "______PATHY 2.17.25". In other words, she is tattooed with the name of the disease the Researchers named in Hudson's Well. Realizing that this woman from the future bears a word that they coined costs the Researchers 0/1D4 **SAN** from the unnatural.

Additionally, give everyone present an **INT×5** roll. Those who succeed figure out that ______pathy may have been spontaneously generated from a time loop, wherein Thartha caught it while traveling back to the past and accidentally spreading it, creating some future epidemic severe enough that she was inoculated before traveling in time. That epiphany costs 1/1D8 **SAN** from the unnatural.

Autopsy

The first incision of an autopsy is the Y cut to the front of the torso. When the acting coroner makes this cut—if the Researchers autopsy Thartha—give them an **Alertness** roll. If it succeeds, the coroner notices that the skin over Thartha's sternum inexplicably begins to open ahead of the scalpel. The Researcher also notices that parts of the skeleton are not bone but some smooth plastic or resin, extremely tough.

The strange, durable substance that reinforces her bones does not interfere with X-rays or MRI scans.

If they study Thartha's brain, the Researchers find the same microbes as in victims of ______pathy. In Thartha, however, they do no harm. They swim and blink around, feeding on each other, having no effect on her tissue.

If the examiner succeeds at a **Medicine** test, they discover that Thartha's tissues carry unusual patterns of electricity. Occasionally, a cell or batch of cells particularly infested with the unnatural microbes releases an inexplicable surge of electricity. That seems to overcharge the microbes, which burst and vanish. That hints that electrical currents may disrupt the microbes in other victims.

Well into the autopsy—the exact timing is up to you—some convergence of forces erupts in the dead woman. Thartha's exposed sternum or brain suddenly discharges a violet flash. If a Researcher's player specifically describes getting away quickly, the Researcher is unharmed. Otherwise, the Researcher gets a **Dodge** roll. If the **Dodge** roll fails, the Researcher is encased in some sort of spatial anomaly. Before the stunned eyes of any onlookers, the unwitting Researcher and Thartha both are compressed out of our dimensions, vanishing in a deafening pop of displaced air. Witnessing this costs 1/1D8 **SAN** from the unnatural.

Debriefing

After the Researchers confront Thartha, Buchard and Stusser (or their Delta Green case officer, if both died) try to convince them of the necessity of keeping their unnatural discoveries a secret. They emphasize the virulent danger of Thartha's disease. What the Researchers have seen could rewrite medicine and physics. But how many more people will die if strangers come to see these terrible wonders for themselves?

This is a disease that came from the future. With Thartha and all other carriers either dead or cured, it has no natural source. Protecting the public, the agents argue, means burying this whole affair.

If the Researchers balk, Buchard and Stusser turn grim. They are absolutely convinced of the necessity of keeping this quiet. To save countless lives, they intend to destroy all evidence of Keyert's experiment and Thartha's existence. They and their contacts will see to it that any attempt to bring those facts public are met with career-ending scorn and ridicule.

Meanwhile, Buchard and Stusser ask the team to help set up a quarantine around the Keyert house. Police help the FBI establish and maintain an armed perimeter around it. More CDC bio-containment experts show up to encase the whole building in plastic and keep the public away from Keyert's achievements.

Aftermath

What becomes of the Researchers? How much harm does the contagion ultimately cause?

Containing the Disease

Coming back to this step can make a good end-note for the operation after the Researchers confront the weirdness of the Keyert lab and Thartha. Review their achievements in **CONTAINMENT** on pages 90–91 and add up their containment points.

ZERO CONTAINMENT: The wave of initial exposure spreads to the following towns before burning out: Heber, Aripine, Overgaard, Clay Springs, Pinedale, Linden, Show Low, Taylor, Snowflake, Winslow, and Joseph City. Combined, they have a population around 30,400. About 2,900 people get infected with ______pathy, 762 die, and another 817 have permanent neurological damage or physical handicaps. A small but persistent lunatic fringe considers the ______pathy outbreak a germ-warfare attack on American Indian populations or Mormons.

The mishandling of the Hudson's Well outbreak forces lengthy Senate hearings on the entire CDC, resulting in a lot of firings and restructuring. Dr. Marholm is publicly excoriated, and (if more than one Researcher survives) Marholm makes sure to drag the team down with her. One survivor just might come out of the bureaucratic shit-storm OK and even be considered for recruitment by the Program, if her story is interesting and her actions were above reproach. But she still gets the stink-eye at the grocery store from people who remember her shame-walk out of the Senate hearing on CNN and FOX News. Every surviving Researcher faces potential firing and, depending on their actions or inaction, prosecution, as described on page 80 of the *Agent's Handbook*.

About once a month for the next year, there are ______pathy outbreaks. They start in the American southwest, spread through the U.S. after half a year, and then through all the Americas by the one-year anniversary of the Hudson's Well outbreak. Each flare-up kills around a hundred people (by that time, the disease has developed immunity to M2 ion channel inhibitors, right on schedule) and injures 20 more. The year after that, ______pathy appears about every other month, but now it's global. In developed nations, the death toll is about 80 to 200, depending on population density, or 300 to 400 in the developing world. The in-between nations really suffer, since their transport infrastructure tends to be better than their medical infrastructure. When those outbreaks happen, the death tolls lurk around the low four figures. Being responsible for this after being tasked to prevent it costs each Agent 1/1D4 **SAN** from helplessness.

1–3 CONTAINMENT POINTS: Hudson's Well has a total of 504 cases of ______pathy, out of which there are 45 deaths and 20 people with permanent debilities. Scattered cases throughout the county add another hundred, of whom five die and another two are scarred for life.

Hudson's Well dominates the headlines for a few days, with one political party calling for the heads of everyone involved and the other decrying the first as witch-hunting partisans. Dr. Marholm is forced out of her job. She insists to the last that the team did what it could, but surviving Researchers might get blacklisted from government service.

Outbreaks happen every three or four months throughout the U.S. for the next year, and throughout the Americas the year after that, settling on a steady rate of an outbreak every six months globally. The fatality rates are as described under **ZERO CONTAINMENT** on page 98. Being responsible for this after being tasked to prevent it costs 0/1 **SAN** from helplessness.

4–6 CONTAINMENT POINTS: The total death toll at Hudson's Well is 30, plus five cases with some degree of permanent lack of function. It looks like ______pathy is extinct. Then, 18 months afterwards, it pops up in Guam, of all places. It rattles around the Pacific Rim intermittently after that, cropping up every year or two, killing a hundred people in sparsely populated or primitive areas, or a couple hundred in urban areas. Ten years on, it comes up steadily once a year, somewhere in the globe, killing 100 to 250 people even in optimum conditions.

Hudson's Well dominates the headlines for a week or so. Any survivor(s) might get interviewed for a big-budget documentary, *The Devil in Hudson's Well.* Any comments about time-traveling amazons wind up on the cutting room floor.

Surviving Researchers are congratulated, and each gains a new Bond with Dr. Marholm at a value equal to half the Researcher's Charisma score—as long as no one starts talking about weird stuff.

Each Researcher gains 1D4 **SAN**.

7–8 CONTAINMENT POINTS: Only the patients in the hospital with full-blown symptoms die. An infectee must have gotten out, though, since there's another outbreak eight months later in Mexico, killing 20 people. After that, there's an outbreak somewhere in the world about every year. But the U.N. puts together a pretty good task force on ______pathy (possibly led by a Researcher, or by Dr. Marholm) and keeps fatalities to around 10 to 100 people in sparsely populated environments, and around 20 to 500 in dense urban regions.

The press coverage is broad, but ends pretty quickly. A month or so after it all dies down, Dr. Marholm invites the survivor(s) to travel with her to Washington, D.C. The Secretary of Health and Human Services wants to shake their hands, though presumably he or she is going to hit the sanitizer afterwards.

Each surviving Researcher gains a new Bond with Dr. Marholm at a value equal to half the Researcher's Charisma score, and a permanent 10-percentile increase to **Bureaucracy** from their growing reputation—as long as no one starts talking about weird stuff.

Each Researcher gains 1D6 **SAN**.

9 OR MORE CONTAINMENT POINTS: The Researchers do such a good job keeping a lid on things that few people outside the CDC understand just how well they did. They get some nice pay raises and commendations in their files, but ______pathy becomes a trivia item. The Researchers are asked to downplay the dangers, especially since the only viable samples end up locked in a CDC vault.

Each Researcher gains 2D4 **SAN**.

Researchers' Fates

What becomes of the Researchers also depends on how they reacted to the efforts of Buchard and Stusser to cover up their unnatural discoveries.

NO COOPERATION: The Researcher is completely discredited in public, despite Marholm's attempts at shielding. The Researcher's ludicrous-sounding claims make the CDC look ridiculous and soon cost the Researcher their job. (See **GETTING FIRED** on page 80 of the *Agent's Handbook.)* If the Researcher is a doctor, they take a public share of the blame for anything that went bad at Hudson's Well.

Ask the player for each Researcher in this situation whether they continue trying to go public. After all answer, describe what happens. The more they press their case in public, the more they are pilloried in social media. They receive oblique, threatening phone calls, and cyber-harassment. That costs 0/1 SAN from helplessness and 1D4 from a Bond of the player's choice.

Once more, ask each player in this situation whether the Researcher keeps pushing to go public despite all that. After all answer, roll 1D4 for each who answered "Yes" to determine the result, rerolling or making up something new for a duplicate result:

1D4	Result
1	Framed, arrested, and convicted for child pornography.
2	Framed, arrested, and convicted for embezzlement or fraud.
3	Framed, arrested, and convicted for tax fraud.
4	The Researcher is found dead by suicide after overdosing on fentanyl.

For the impact of prosecution, see **PROSECUTION** on page 80 of the *Agent's Handbook*.

RELUCTANT COOPERATION: The agents say that's the smart choice. They strongly recommends that the Researcher not look any farther. The Researcher has been tagged as a possible Delta Green recruit.

WILLING COOPERATION: The agents seem deeply relieved. They say that someone might be in touch, later. Maybe the Researcher can help save lives on other projects that are just as secret as this one has turned out. The Researcher has definitely been tagged for Delta Green recruitment.

Characters

Sheriff's Deputy or State Trooper

A police officer typically has pistol, baton, taser, and pepper spray holstered, and a carbine stored in the trunk of a patrol car.

Deputy or Trooper

Deputy Danica Thomas, age 46; Deputy Henry Flood, age 35; Trooper Bill Whitehorse, age 30; Trooper Dale Sanchez, age 50; and so on

STR 13 **CON** 12 **DEX** 11 **INT** 11 **POW** 12 **CHA** 11

HP 13 **WP** 12 **SAN** 60 **BREAKING POINT** 48

ARMOR: 5 points from a reinforced Kevlar vest.

SKILLS: Alertness 50%, Athletics 50%, Dodge 40%, Drive Auto 50%, Firearms 50%, Foreign Language (Apache, Navajo, or Spanish) 20%, HUMINT 40%, Law 30%, Melee Weapons 50%, Persuade 40%, Search 50%, Unarmed Combat 50%.

ATTACKS: .40 S&W or 9mm pistol 50%, damage 1D10.

AR-15 carbine 50%, damage 1D12, Armor Piercing 3.

Baton 50%, damage 1D6.

Taser 55%, stuns target.

Pepper spray 55%, stuns target.

Unarmed 50%, damage 1D4−1.

OTHER EQUIPMENT: See **TOOLS OF THE TRADE** on page 85 of the *Agent's Handbook*.

Special Agent Nell Buchard

A CIA case officer turned FBI counterterrorism agent, born to a Spanish mother and a white American father.

Agent Nell Buchard

Delta Green agent, age 38

STR 10 **CON** 11 **DEX** 10 **INT** 13 **POW** 13 **CHA** 12

HP 11 **WP** 13 **SAN** 60 **BREAKING POINT** 52

ARMOR: 3 points from a Kevlar vest.

BONDS: Ex-husband (Warren Buchard), 12; Daughter (Nancy Benedict), 12.

DISORDERS: Adapted to violence.

SKILLS: Alertness 60%, Bureaucracy 40%, Criminology 70%, Disguise 50%, Drive 60%, Firearms 40%, Foreign Language (French) 40%, Foreign Language (Spanish) 50%, HUMINT 60%, Law 40%, Navigate 50%, Occult 40%, Persuade 60%, SIGINT 40%, Stealth 60%, Unarmed Combat 70%.

ATTACKS: Shotgun (with shot) 60%, damage 2D10 at close range, armor counts double.

SIG Sauer P228 pistol 40%, damage 1D10.

Unarmed 70%, damage 1D4–1.

OTHER EQUIPMENT: See **TOOLS OF THE TRADE** on page 85 of the *Agent's Handbook*.

Special Agent Bradley Stusser

An African-American EPA investigator deputized to the FBI under a secretive counterterrorism task force.

Agent Bradley Stusser

Delta Green agent, age 44

STR 11 **CON** 12 **DEX** 11 **INT** 13 **POW** 10 **CHA** 12

HP 12 **WP** 13 **SAN** 60 **BREAKING POINT** 52

ARMOR: 3 points from a Kevlar vest.

BONDS: Wife (Paz McNamara), 12; mother (Brenda Stusser), 12; sister (Nancy Kagan), 12.

DISORDERS: Adapted to helplessness.

SKILLS: Alertness 50%, Athletics 50%, Bureaucracy 60%, Criminology 50%, Dodge 40%, Drive 40%, Firearms 60%, Forensics 40%, HUMINT 50%, Law 50%, Occult 20%, Persuade 50%, Pharmacy 50%, Science (Environmental) 60%, Search 50%, Survival 50%, Unarmed Combat 60%.

ATTACKS: Shotgun (with slugs) 60%, damage 2D6.

SIG Sauer P226 pistol 40%, damage 1D10.

Unarmed 60%, damage 1D4–1.

OTHER EQUIPMENT: See **TOOLS OF THE TRADE** on page 85 of the *Agent's Handbook*.

Stage 3 Patient Gone Mad

A violent patient in Stage 3 of the infection attacks with mindless savagery.

Maddened Patient

Dying and destructive

STR 10 **CON** 10 **DEX** 10 **INT** 10 **POW** 10 **CHA** 10

HP 4 **WP** 10 **SAN** 38 **BREAKING POINT** 40

ARMOR: None.

ATTACKS: Chair 50%, damage 1D6+2.

Stolen scalpel or shard of broken glass 50%, damage 1D4+2, Armor Piercing 3.

Unarmed 60%, damage 1D4+1.

SAVAGERY: The patient gains a +20% bonus and +2 damage to each Unarmed Combat attack, Melee Weapons attack, STR×5 test, and CON×5 test. That is included in the patient's listed attacks. But the maddened patient's attacks never count as fighting back—any successful attack roll hits, no matter what the patient rolls. The maddened patient fails all other skill and stat checks except for DEX×5 tests.

Thartha

Thartha is clearly human—but one with inexplicable evolutionary mutations and artificial enhancements.

Thartha

Doomed visitor

STR 18 **CON** 15 **DEX** 10 **INT** 12 **POW** 7 **CHA** 10

HP 17 **WP** 11 **SAN** 30 **BREAKING POINT** 28

SKILLS: Alertness 40%, Athletics 50%, Craft (Unknown Futuristic Repairs) 50%.

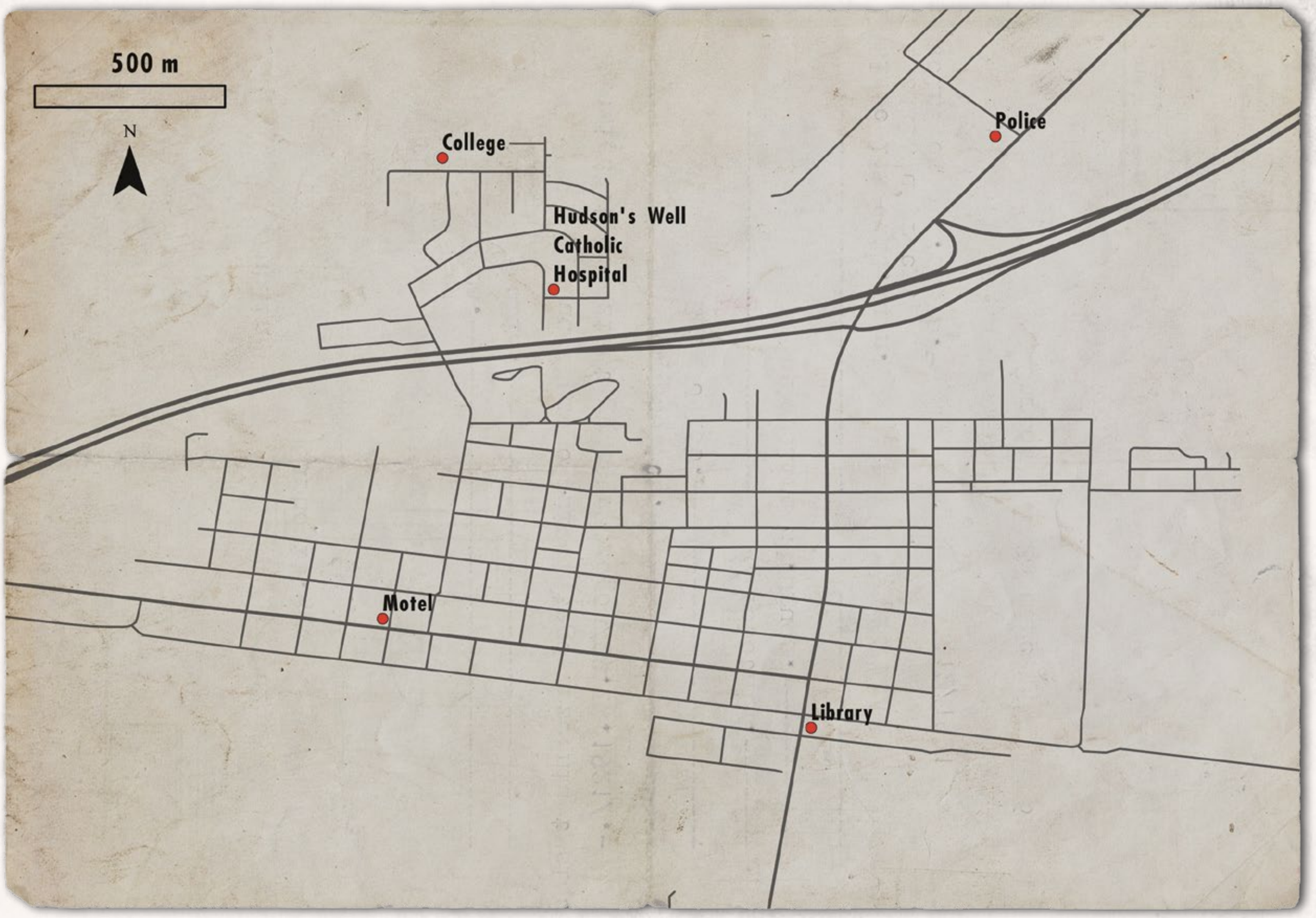
ATTACKS: Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4+1.

REINFORCED SKELETON: Thartha takes half damage from physical weapon attacks.

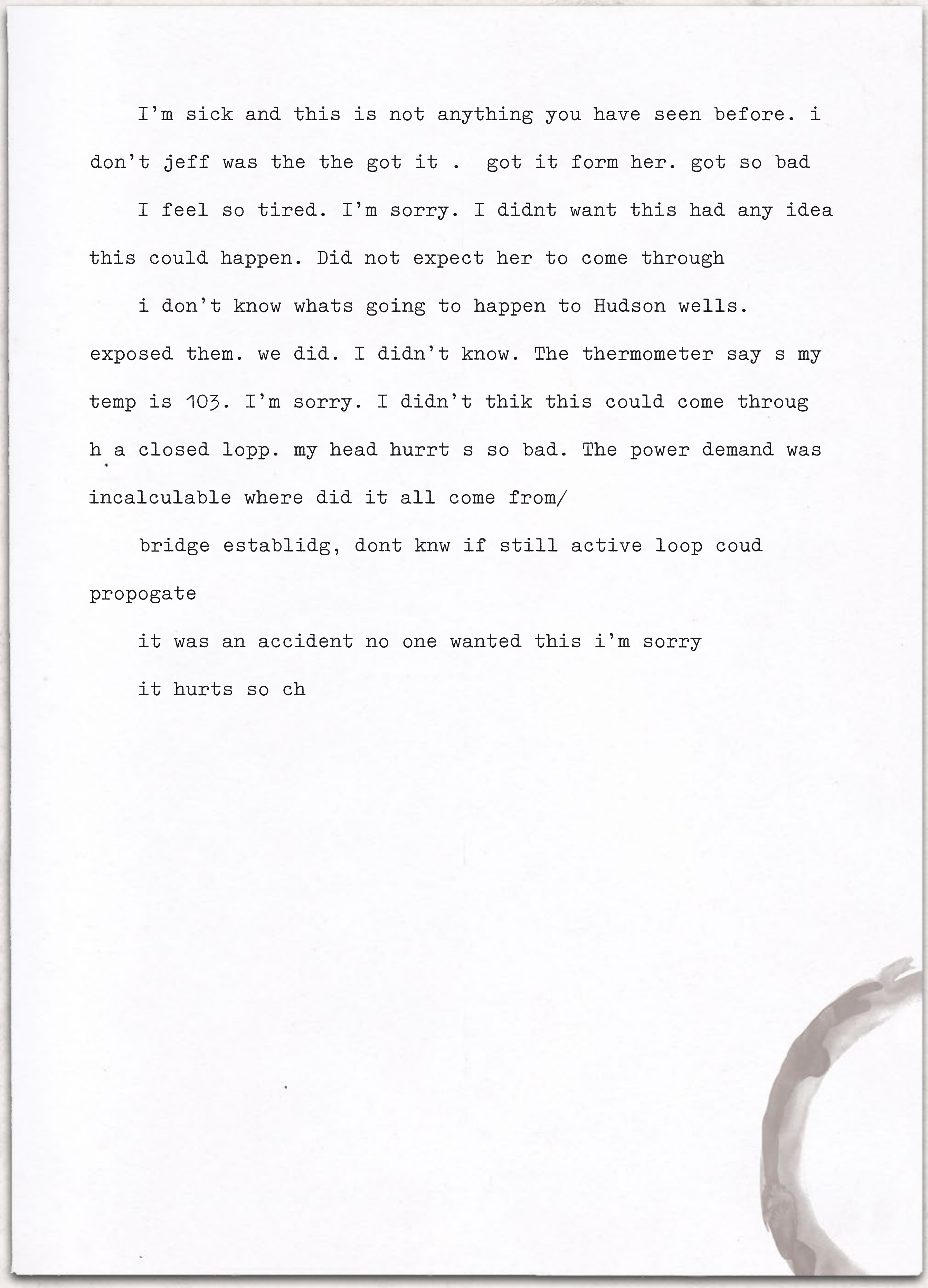
REGENERATION: If she has 1 or more hit points, Thartha heals 1 hp at the end of each turn. (After she dies, the flesh still heals itself but she does not come back to life.)

SANITY LOSS: 0/1 from the unnatural. Seeing her flesh knit itself back together costs 1/1D4 **SAN** from the unnatural, or 1/1D8 if it happens after she dies.

Hudson's Well Map (Players)


500 m
N
College
Hudson's Well Catholic Hospital
Police
Motel
Library

Keyert's Note Handout



I'm sick and this is not anything you have seen before. i don't jeff was the the got it . got it form her. got so bad

I feel so tired. I'm sorry. I didnt want this had any idea this could happen. Did not expect her to come through

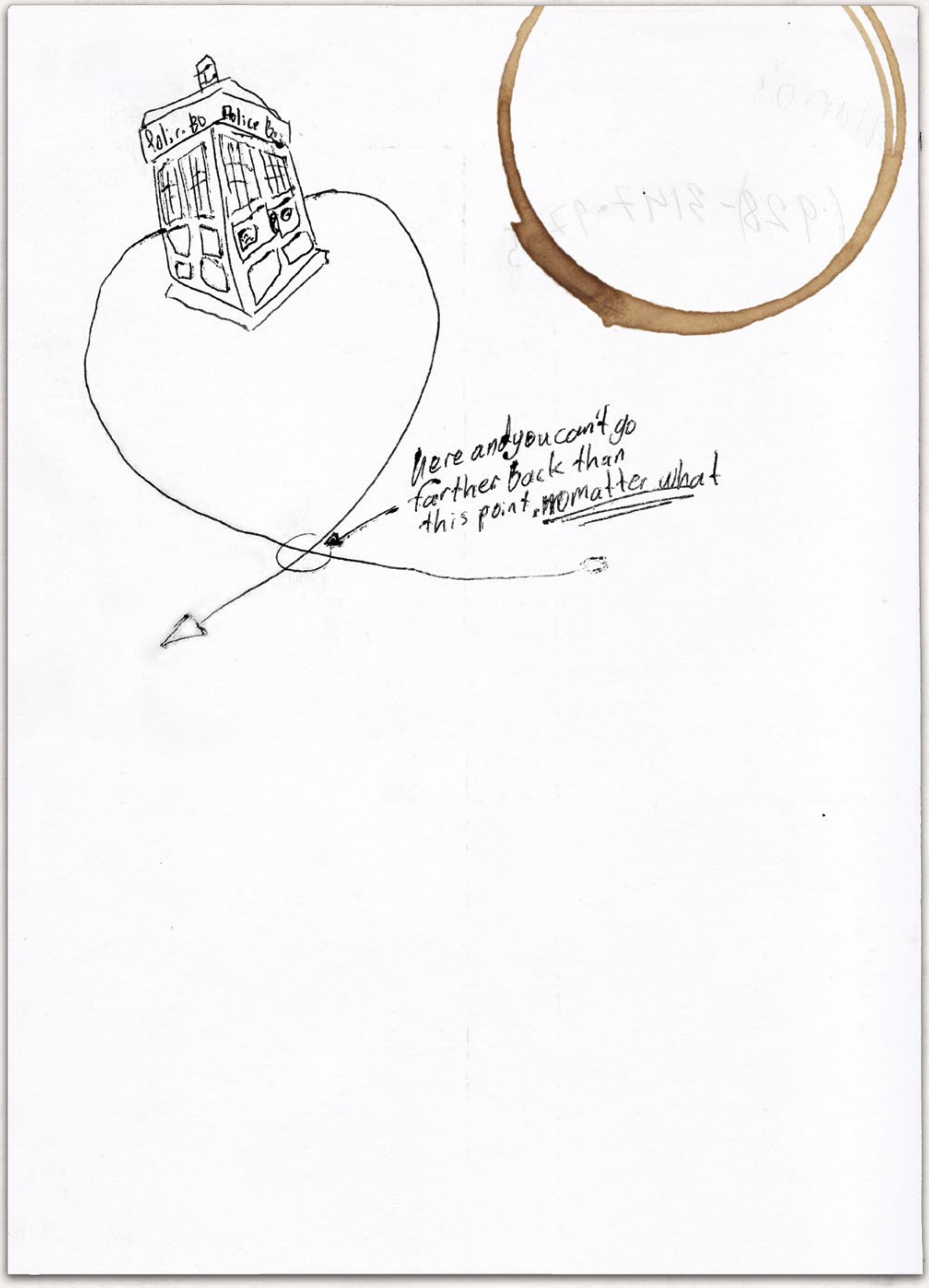
i don't know whats going to happen to Hudson wells. exposed them. we did. I didn't know. The thermometer say s my temp is 103. I'm sorry. I didn't thik this could come throug h a closed lopp. my head hurrt s so bad. The power demand was incalculable where did it all come from/

bridge establidg, dont knw if still active loop coud propogate

it was an accident no one wanted this i'm sorry

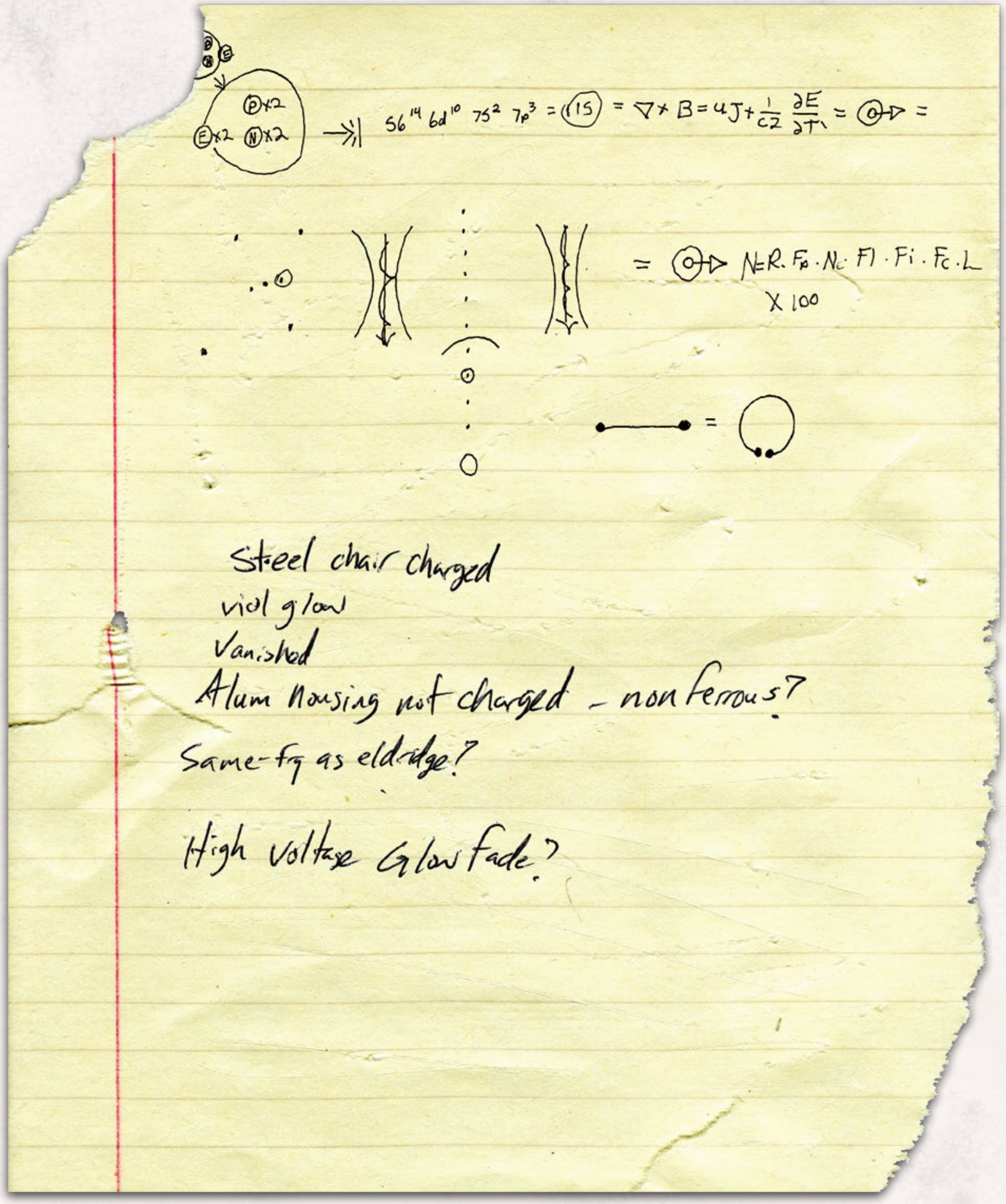
it hurts so ch

Keyert's Doodle Handout


Polic. Bo
Police Bo

Here and you can't go
farther Back than
this point, no matter what

Keyert's Memo Handout



$\rightarrow\!\!\!\!\rightarrow| \; 56^{14}\,6d^{10}\,7s^{2}\,7p^{3} = \boxed{115} = \nabla \times B = 4J + \frac{1}{c2}\frac{\partial E}{\partial T} =$ ⊙⊳ =

= ⊙⊳ N=R. Fp · Nc · Fl · Fi · Fc · L
X 100

Steel chair charged
viol glow
Vanished
Alum housing not charged - non ferrous?
Same-fq as eldridge?

High voltage Glow fade?

Thartha Video Handout

Dr. Keyert steps into the frame in front of the machine with the round aperture in its center. She smiles tightly, then speaks.

KEYERT: Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Rosamund Keyert, it’s, um, 11:11 a.m., November 19th, 2012. This is the third activation of, um, the Bosonic repeater experiment. Our goal today is to reinforce the signal by rotating a small space of… er, a small area of space into the temporal dimension, so to speak. We’re going to measure this, um, recursion using the microwave laser here, and the receiver over…here. The goal is to spike the signal for eight picoseconds, and to hit it with the microwave laser so that we can, um, determine whether it’s actually there. So. Here we go.

She steps out of the shot. The sound of a closing door is audible. All is still except for a buzzing noise. Then she returns to the frame.

KEYERT: All right, the topography definitely didn’t fold, but based on the power levels, we never even got past the first stage of synchronic infusion…. This happened in the first test too, and that time we tracked the problem to the phasing array. If we didn’t get anything phased, it wouldn’t trigger the re-acceleration. So I’m going to adjust that and…see if we can’t make something happen.

She then opens a panel on the machine and examines it before reaching in to effect a few repairs with a tiny screwdriver. Satisfied, she nods at the camera and steps aside. Once again, the audio picks up the closing door. The buzzing resumes, building in intensity.

Suddenly there is a violet flare and shower of sparks. The lenses and antennae are bent back and shoved out of the way as an enormously tall woman materializes from nowhere. One second, she’s not there and the next she is. She falls forward onto the floor with a grunt, then stands.

The visitor is 2.3 m tall and weighs about 120 kg. She has almond-shaped brown eyes, brown hair in a braid, and dark tan skin. Her features are angular, with high cheek-bones, a pointed chin, and a straight, long nose with narrow nostrils. She wears a fitted coverall that seems to be of cotton canvas, no shoes, and no jewelry or ornamentation. She seems taken aback.

STRANGER: Ganta tanic? Tanic opropin? Zutha oprosat?

She shifts her gaze as the camera picks up the sound of the door opening, and her eyes widen.

STRANGER: Zurnep uglinican!
KEYERT: Holy fucking shit!

The stranger turns and examines the equipment behind her quizzically before the video abruptly cuts out.

Thartha Interview Handout

The video remains focused on the tall stranger. She is awkwardly perched on a chair that is too small for her. The other voice is Keyert's.

KEYERT: First off let me…welcome you to…here. This is Hudson's Well, Arizona, in the United States of America. The year is 2012.

THARTHA: Twelve?

KEYERT: Yes! That is the year! Do you speak English?

THARTHA: Engsish…

KEYERT: What is your name?

THARTHA: Name…

KEYERT: My name is Rosamund. Ro-sa-mund.

THARTHA: (gesturing at self) Thartha.

KEYERT: Your name is 'Thartha'?

THARTHA: Thartha. Two thousand twelve… Two. Tree. Fvor. Un.

KEYERT: Wait, are you telling me you're from the year 2341?

THARTHA: 2341, odom sacrilent.

KEYERT: I don't…we don't understand you?

THARTHA: Three hundred thirty nine yes?

THARTHA: Thartha. Ah-pen. Open 2089 basan helic.

KEYERT: Yes! Helictical Bosonic topography creating a tran-schronal loop!

THARTHA: Thartha years back open. No cathyuloh? Obvama.

KEYERT: The president. Obama, yes, you know Obama? This is just unbelievable!

THARTHA: San chan yes, san chan no?

KEYERT: I don't understand you.

THARTHA: Nuculero abbadon! San chan orbit! San chan yoy gor!

KEYERT: I don't…I don't know those words. I'm sorry, Thartha. We're trying, we're really trying…what language do you speak? What words Thartha words?

THARTHA: Thartha anglanto words, toltish. English 2012. Anglanto 2130? 2150? Post osbom.

KEYERT: (inaudible)

THARTHA: Nuculero abbadon! Energy…sun? Small, little sun? Little sun ground. Energy. Big energy.

KEYERT: Are you describing a nuclear weapon?

THARTHA: Years ago. Othoy. Othoy ang er.

KEYERT: Look, are we…do people use, um, Bosonic helix travel in your time?

THARTHA: Yifyan. Yifyan years travel. Mot shun.

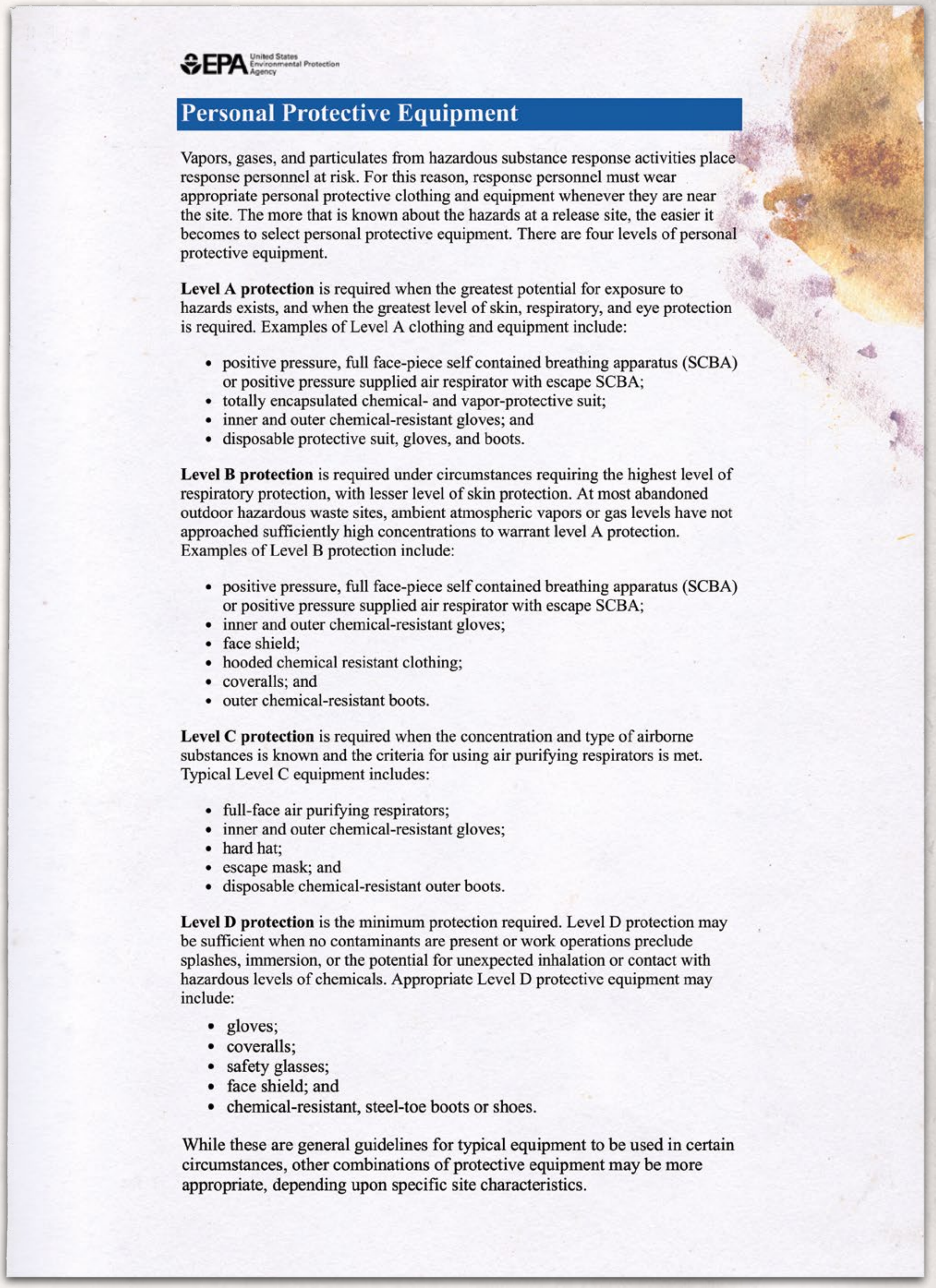
KEYERT: And this is the start of the loop, right?

THARTHA: Yifyan motion far far years back go. Yoy gor non-isolate, non…worldsheet?

KEYERT: Oh my God, you still know about worldsheet theory in the twenty-fourth century!

THARTHA: Worldsheet is.

Personal Protective Equipment Handout



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Personal Protective Equipment

Vapors, gases, and particulates from hazardous substance response activities place response personnel at risk. For this reason, response personnel must wear appropriate personal protective clothing and equipment whenever they are near the site. The more that is known about the hazards at a release site, the easier it becomes to select personal protective equipment. There are four levels of personal protective equipment.

Level A protection is required when the greatest potential for exposure to hazards exists, and when the greatest level of skin, respiratory, and eye protection is required. Examples of Level A clothing and equipment include:

- positive pressure, full face-piece self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) or positive pressure supplied air respirator with escape SCBA;
- totally encapsulated chemical- and vapor-protective suit;
- inner and outer chemical-resistant gloves; and
- disposable protective suit, gloves, and boots.

Level B protection is required under circumstances requiring the highest level of respiratory protection, with lesser level of skin protection. At most abandoned outdoor hazardous waste sites, ambient atmospheric vapors or gas levels have not approached sufficiently high concentrations to warrant level A protection. Examples of Level B protection include:

- positive pressure, full face-piece self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) or positive pressure supplied air respirator with escape SCBA;
- inner and outer chemical-resistant gloves;
- face shield;
- hooded chemical resistant clothing;
- coveralls; and
- outer chemical-resistant boots.

Level C protection is required when the concentration and type of airborne substances is known and the criteria for using air purifying respirators is met. Typical Level C equipment includes:

- full-face air purifying respirators;
- inner and outer chemical-resistant gloves;
- hard hat;
- escape mask; and
- disposable chemical-resistant outer boots.

Level D protection is the minimum protection required. Level D protection may be sufficient when no contaminants are present or work operations preclude splashes, immersion, or the potential for unexpected inhalation or contact with hazardous levels of chemicals. Appropriate Level D protective equipment may include:

- gloves;
- coveralls;
- safety glasses;
- face shield; and
- chemical-resistant, steel-toe boots or shoes.

While these are general guidelines for typical equipment to be used in certain circumstances, other combinations of protective equipment may be more appropriate, depending upon specific site characteristics.

Stages of the Disease

The physicians at Hudson's Well have tentatively identified three stages to the infection:

- **STAGE 1:** fever and weakness
- **STAGE 2:** tremors, convulsions, vertigo, disrupted sleep, and loss of control over tears, swallowing, and the bladder
- **STAGE 3:** psychosis, including hallucinations, delusions, and violently disorganized self-destructive behavior; only restraints, heavy sedatives, or medically-induced coma preventing them acting out

In all stages, in some victims the symptoms suddenly fade altogether for a while and then return.

Naming the Disease

The Researcher who identifies the illness as a new disorder gets to name it. Before they isolate it, their bosses refer to it as "the unidentified syndrome" and the doctors on the scene call it "the mystery infection." But once Researchers define the illness, the one who makes the roll that identifies it gets to name it.

Some options to suggest if they get stuck are: A formal Latin name (like velox febris, meaning "quick fever" or divisa caput meaning "split head"), an acronym (such as RONI for "Rapid Onset Neuralgic Infection" or SCOF for "Sudden Contagious Occipital Fever") or simply a description ("Hudson's Well Syndrome" or "Langzweil's Disease").

Whatever the Researcher names it, that becomes its official, published, formal, acknowledged name.

HWCH Medical Staff

The crisis at Hudson's Well Catholic Hospital is being handled by the hospital's own staff and volunteers who drove in from Flagstaff.

Hudson's Well

- Maya Paulden, M.D. (deceased)
- Fritz Strickland, M.D. (senior)
- Andrea Cray, N.P. (senior)
- Richard Ramirez, R.N.
- Mia Smith, R.N.
- Isabella Begay, R.N.
- Luis Tsotsie, R.N.

From Flagstaff

- David Abrankovitch, M.D. (radiologist)
- Aya Chandreskar, M.D.
- Angela Garcia, M.D. (senior physician)
- Sophia Anderson, R.N. (at the college observing quarantine)
- Ashley Donovan, R.N. (senior nurse)

>> Research Notes—Wed, 21 NOV 2012

Time	Researcher 1 Activity	Researcher 2 Activity	Researcher 3 Activity	Researcher 4 Activity	Researcher 5 Activity	Researcher 6 Activity	Notes
00:00							
04:00							
08:00							• Strickland contacts CDC. • Non-fever E.R. referrals directed to nearby Barnard Springs Medical Clinic. • CDC response team departs from ATL. • Medical team from Flagstaff arrives at Hudson’s Well.
12:00							• CDC response team lands at PHX
16:00							• CDC response team arrives at Hudson’s Well
20:00							

>> Research Notes

Time	Researcher 1 Activity	Researcher 2 Activity	Researcher 3 Activity	Researcher 4 Activity	Researcher 5 Activity	Researcher 6 Activity	Notes
00:00							
04:00							
08:00							
12:00							
16:00							
20:00							

>> Contagion Developments—Tue, 20 NOV 2012

Time	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Death
16:00	Liz Maurey			
17:00				
18:00				
19:00	Francesca Maurey Julie Maurey			
20:00		Liz Maurey		
21:00				
22:00		Julie Maurey		
23:00				

>> Contagion Developments—Wed, 21 NOV 2012

Time	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Death
00:00		Francesca Maurey		
01:00	Mia Smith, R.N.		Liz Maurey	
02:00			Julie Maurey	Liz Maurey
03:00				
04:00			Francesca Maurey	Julie Maurey
05:00	Amad Malouf			
06:00	Maya Paulden, M.D. Harudo Cortez Henrietta Cortez	Amad Malouf		Francesca Maurey
07:00	Stephen Embry	Mia Smith, R.N.		
08:00	Richard Ramirez, R.N.			
09:00		Stephen Embry		
10:00		Henrietta Cortez		
11:00	Craig Amberlin Aya Chandreskar, M.D.	Richard Ramirez, R.N.	Amad Malouf Maya Paulden, M.D.	Philippa Jones
12:00	Luis Tsotsie, R.N.	Aya Chandreskar, M.D.	Mia Smith, R.N.	
13:00	Tate Willert	Harudo Cortez		Maya Paulden, M.D.
14:00	Orenthal Kimmons		Henrietta Cortez	
15:00	John Pahabi Fritz Strickland, M.D.		Stephen Embry	
16:00	Dylan O’Dell			
17:00	Charles Davies	Tate Willert	Richard Ramirez	Amad Malouf
18:00	Delmar Bird Andrea Cray, R.N.	Craig Amberlin Fritz Strickland, M.D.	Aya Chandreskar, M.D. Harudo Cortez	Mia Smith, R.N.
19:00		John Pahabi		Henrietta Cortez
20:00	David Abrankovitch, M.D.	Charles Davies Orenthal Kimmons		Stephen Embry
21:00		Delmar Bird Luis Tsotsie, R.N.	Tate Willert	Harudo Cortez
22:00	Ashley Donovan, R.N.	Charles Davies		
23:00	Isabella Begay, R.N.		John Pahabi Fritz Strickland, M.D.	Richard Ramirez

>> Contagion Developments—Thu, 22 NOV 2012 AM

Time	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Death
00:00		Andrea Cray, R.N.	Craig Amberlin	
01:00				
02:00		David Abrankovitch, M.D.		Aya Chandreskar, M.D.
03:00				John Pahabi Tate Willert
04:00			Orenthal Kimmons	
05:00		Ashley Donovan, R.N.	Andrea Cray, R.N. Charles Davies	Fritz Strickland, M.D.
06:00			Luis Tsotsie, R.N.	
07:00			David Abrankovitch, M.D.	
08:00		Isabella Begay, R.N.	Ashley Donovan, R.N.	
09:00			Delmar Bird	Craig Amberlin Andrea Cray, R.N.
10:00				Orenthal Kimmons
11:00			Isabella Begay, R.N.	Charles Davies

>> Contagion Developments—Thu, 22 NOV 2012 PM

Time	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Death
12:00				Ashley Donovan, R.N.
13:00				David Abrankovitch, M.D.
14:00				Isabella Begay, R.N.
15:00				Luis Tsotsie, R.N.
16:00				Delmar Bird
17:00				
18:00				
19:00				
20:00				
21:00				
22:00				
23:00				

>> Contagion Developments—AM

Time	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Death
00:00				
01:00				
02:00				
03:00				
04:00				
05:00				
06:00				
07:00				
08:00				
09:00				
10:00				
11:00				

>> Contagion Developments—PM

Time	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Death
12:00				
13:00				
14:00				
15:00				
16:00				
17:00				
18:00				
19:00				
20:00				
21:00				
22:00				
23:00				

PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK Janelle G. Baker, M.D.	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER Physician, CDC Emergency Operations Center

SEX ☒ F ☐ M ☐ ________	AGE 39	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

The Emergency Operations Center is the crisis-response section of the CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response. Its experts can respond to an emergency in hours while formulating a broad strategy.

FILL IN THE DETAILS: Work with the Handler and other players to invent this character's description, Bonds, and Motivations. Then talk to the other players about their characters and decide what this character thinks about the others.

GEAR AND NOTES

GO-BAG: A suitcase ready for travel, with clothing, toiletries, any necessary medications, personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks, and goggles, duct tape for jury-rigging repairs to their HAZMAT suits, and a CDC credit card for travel expenses.

COMPUTER AND PHONE: A toughened laptop computer with a satellite uplink, a satellite phone, and a high-end smartphone. These offer an extensive professional library.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	40%	1D4−1		

ARMOR

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	9	45%	Hit Points (HP)	10	
Constitution (CON)	10	50%	Willpower Points (WP)	13	
Dexterity (DEX)	13	65%	Sanity Points (SAN)	99	63
Intelligence (INT)	16	80%	Breaking Point (BP)		52
Power (POW)	13	65%			
Charisma (CHA)	11	55%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
	11
	11
	11

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Partial adaptation to violence: You automatically succeed at Sanity tests for seeing and working with bodies and gore, but not for inflicting violence.

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☒ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	30%	First Aid	60%	Ride	10%
Alertness	20%	Forensics	0%	Science: Biology	60%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	30%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	0%	Search	40%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	70%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	30%	Medicine	60%	Survival	10%
Bureaucracy	50%	Melee Weapons	30%	Swim	20%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science:	0%	Unarmed Combat	40%
Craft:	0%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	30%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Sciences:	
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	40%	(Environmental)	50%
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	70%	(Ecology)	50%
Dodge	30%	Pilot:	0%		
Drive	40%				
Firearms	20%	Psychotherapy	60%		

RESTRICTED

THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION

PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK	Cedrick K. Henderson, M.D.
PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER	Physician, CDC Emergency Operations Center
SEX	☐ F ☒ M ☐ ________
AGE	42
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION	

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

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GEAR AND NOTES

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COMPUTER AND PHONE: A toughened laptop computer with a satellite uplink, a satellite phone, and a high-end smartphone. These offer an extensive professional library.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	40%	1D4−1		

ARMOR

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	10	50%	Hit Points (HP)	12	
Constitution (CON)	13	65%	Willpower Points (WP)	12	
Dexterity (DEX)	12	60%	Sanity Points (SAN)	99	58
Intelligence (INT)	15	80%	Breaking Point (BP)		48
Power (POW)	12	60%			
Charisma (CHA)	10	50%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
	10
	10
	10

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Partial adaptation to violence: You automatically succeed at Sanity tests for seeing and working with bodies and gore, but not for inflicting violence.

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☒ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	60%	Ride	10%
Alertness	40%	Forensics	0%	Science: Biology	60%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	10%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	0%	Search	40%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	50%	Medicine	60%	Survival	10%
Bureaucracy	50%	Melee Weapons	30%	Swim	40%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science:	0%	Unarmed Combat	40%
Craft:	0%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	50%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Sciences:	50%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	40%	(Genetics)	50%
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%	(Immunology)	50%
Dodge	50%	Pilot: Boat	40%	(Marine Biology)	50%
Drive	20%				
Firearms	20%	Psychotherapy	10%		

RESTRICTED

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PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER
Billie B. Jester, M.D.	Physician, CDC Emergency Operations Center

SEX	AGE	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION
☒ F ☐ M ☐ ________	51	

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

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COMPUTER AND PHONE: A toughened laptop computer with a satellite uplink, a satellite phone, and a high-end smartphone. These offer an extensive professional library.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	40%	1D4−1		

ARMOR

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	10	50%	Hit Points (HP)	10	
Constitution (CON)	10	50%	Willpower Points (WP)	14	
Dexterity (DEX)	12	60%	Sanity Points (SAN)	99	68
Intelligence (INT)	16	80%	Breaking Point (BP)		56
Power (POW)	14	70%			
Charisma (CHA)	10	50%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
	10
	10
	10

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Partial adaptation to violence: You automatically succeed at Sanity tests for seeing and working with bodies and gore, but not for inflicting violence.

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☒ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	80%	Ride	10%
Alertness	40%	Forensics	50%	Science: Biology	60%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	10%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	0%	Search	40%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	40%	Surgery	70%
Athletics	30%	Medicine	80%	Survival	10%
Bureaucracy	50%	Melee Weapons	30%	Swim	20%
Computer Science	0%	Military Science:	0%	Unarmed Combat	40%
Craft:	0%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	10%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Science (Microbiology)	50%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	60%		
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	70%		
Dodge	30%	Pilot:	0%		
Drive	20%				
Firearms	20%	Psychotherapy	10%		

THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION

RESTRICTED

PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK Dustin A. Roth		PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER Assistant Program Manager, CDC Emergency Operations Center	
SEX ☐ F ☒ M ☐ ________	AGE 40	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION	

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

You help run an organization. Someone has to secure funding, move resources, and make connections, and that's you. You control a budget and are responsible for how your program is maintained and where the money goes. Organizations discover the most startling things in their pursuit of profit or the public good.

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GEAR AND NOTES

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COMPUTER AND PHONE: A toughened laptop computer with a satellite uplink, a satellite phone, and a high-end smartphone. These offer an extensive professional library.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	40%	1D4−1		

ARMOR

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	10	50%	Hit Points (HP)	10	
Constitution (CON)	10	50%	Willpower Points (WP)	12	
Dexterity (DEX)	10	50%	Sanity Points (SAN)	99	58
Intelligence (INT)	15	75%	Breaking Point (BP)		48
Power (POW)	12	60%			
Charisma (CHA)	15	75%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
	15
	15
	15
	15

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Partial adaptation to violence: You automatically succeed at Sanity tests for seeing and working with bodies and gore, but not for inflicting violence.

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☒ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	80%	First Aid	10%	Ride	10%
Alertness	20%	Forensics	0%	Science:	0%
Anthropology	30%	Heavy Machinery	10%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	0%	Search	40%
Art:	0%	History	40%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	50%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	60%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	30%	Medicine	0%	Survival	10%
Bureaucracy	80%	Melee Weapons	30%	Swim	20%
Computer Science	50%	Military Science:	0%	Unarmed Combat	40%
Craft:	0%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	10%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	30%	Occult	10%	Language (French)	50%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	70%		
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%		
Dodge	30%	Pilot:	0%		
Drive	20%				
Firearms	20%	Psychotherapy	10%		

RESTRICTED
TOP SECRET / SPECIAL ACCESS REQUIRED–DELTA GREEN
ORCON / SPECIAL ACCESS

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PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK Maria R. Jacob, Ph.D.		PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER Scientist, CDC Emergency Operations Center
SEX ☒ F ☐ M ☐ ________	AGE 45	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

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COMPUTER AND PHONE: A toughened laptop computer with a satellite uplink, a satellite phone, and a high-end smartphone. These offer an extensive professional library.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	60%	1D4−1		

ARMOR

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	13	65%	Hit Points (HP)	12	
Constitution (CON)	10	50%	Willpower Points (WP)	13	
Dexterity (DEX)	12	60%	Sanity Points (SAN)	99	63
Intelligence (INT)	14	85%	Breaking Point (BP)		52
Power (POW)	13	65%			
Charisma (CHA)	10	50%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
	10
	10
	10
	10

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Partial adaptation to violence: You automatically succeed at Sanity tests for seeing and working with bodies and gore, but not for inflicting violence.

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☒ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	40%	First Aid	10%	Ride	10%
Alertness	20%	Forensics	0%	Science:	80%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	10%	Biochemistry	
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	0%	Search	40%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	10%
Artillery	0%	Law	0%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	50%	Medicine	0%	Survival	10%
Bureaucracy	40%	Melee Weapons	50%	Swim	20%
Computer Science	40%	Military Science:	0%	Unarmed Combat	60%
Craft:	0%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	10%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Science (Physics)	50%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	40%	Science (Chemistry)	50%
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%	Language (Spanish)	40%
Dodge	50%	Pilot:	0%	Language (Latin)	40%
Drive	20%			Language (Greek)	40%
Firearms	20%	Psychotherapy	10%		

RESTRICTED

THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION

PERSONAL

NAME AND RANK John S. Neuman, Ph.D.	PROFESSION AND EMPLOYER Scientist, CDC Emergency Operations Center

SEX ☐ F ☒ M ☐ ________	AGE 37	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

REMARKS

PERSONAL DETAILS

The Emergency Operations Center is the crisis-response section of the CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response. Its experts can respond to an emergency in hours while formulating a broad strategy.

FILL IN THE DETAILS: Work with the Handler and other players to invent this character's description, Bonds, and Motivations. Then talk to the other players about their characters and decide what this character thinks about the others.

GEAR AND NOTES

GO-BAG: A suitcase ready for travel, with clothing, toiletries, any necessary medications, personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks, and goggles, duct tape for jury-rigging repairs to their HAZMAT suits, and a CDC credit card for travel expenses.

COMPUTER AND PHONE: A toughened laptop computer with a satellite uplink, a satellite phone, and a high-end smartphone. These offer an extensive professional library.

SPECIAL TRAINING	SKILL OR STAT USED

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS	SKILL %	DAMAGE	ARMOR PIERCING	RANGE
Unarmed	40%	1D4−1		

ARMOR

Body armor reduces the damage of all attacks except Called Shots and successful Lethality rolls.

INJURIES

WOUNDS AND AILMENTS

Has First Aid been attempted since the last injury? ☐ If yes: only Medicine, Surgery, or long-term rest can help further

STATISTICAL DATA

STATISTICS	SCORE	×5	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES	MAX	CURRENT
Strength (STR)	10	50%	Hit Points (HP)	10	
Constitution (CON)	10	50%	Willpower Points (WP)	14	
Dexterity (DEX)	10	10%	Sanity Points (SAN)	99	68
Intelligence (INT)	17	85%	Breaking Point (BP)		56
Power (POW)	14	70%			
Charisma (CHA)	11	55%			

PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA

BONDS	SCORE
	11
	11
	11
	11

MOTIVATIONS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

Partial adaptation to violence: You automatically succeed at Sanity tests for seeing and working with bodies and gore, but not for inflicting violence.

INCIDENTS OF SAN LOSS WITHOUT GOING INSANE

Violence ☒ ☐ ☐ *adapted* Helplessness ☐ ☐ ☐ *adapted*

SKILLS

Accounting	10%	First Aid	30%	Ride	10%
Alertness	20%	Forensics	40%	Science: Microbiology	80%
Anthropology	0%	Heavy Machinery	10%		
Archeology	0%	Heavy Weapons	0%	Search	20%
Art:	0%	History	10%	SIGINT	0%
		HUMINT	10%	Stealth	30%
Artillery	0%	Law	40%	Surgery	0%
Athletics	50%	Medicine	0%	Survival	30%
Bureaucracy	40%	Melee Weapons	30%	Swim	20%
Computer Science	40%	Military Science:	0%	Unarmed Combat	40%
Craft:	0%			Unnatural	0%
		Navigate	10%	Languages & Other Skills:	
Criminology	10%	Occult	10%	Science (Biology)	70%
Demolitions	0%	Persuade	20%	Science (Chemistry)	50%
Disguise	10%	Pharmacy	0%		
Dodge	30%	Pilot:	0%		
Drive	40%				
Firearms	40%	Psychotherapy	10%		

RESTRICTED

TOP SECRET // ORCON / SPECIAL ACCESS REQUIRED - DELTA GREEN

THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION

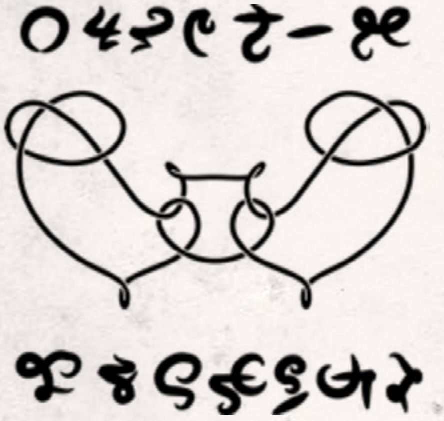
5 AUG 2013

// Wormwood Arena //

“What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; th’ unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield.”
—Milton, Paradise Lost

Introduction

Francisco Seles is an NSA intelligence analyst affiliated with the Program. Two months ago, he was conducting a routine review of images flagged as potentially containing unnaturally dangerous symbols. He spotted a candidate in a pamphlet which had been photographed and emailed from a cell phone. It advertised a self-help program called "Harmonic Bliss." Seles sent the image—a knotted pattern with lines of mysterious symbols or letters above and below—for further review. Researchers confirmed its unnatural provenance.



Harmonic Bliss is a New Age-style sect, established in 1992 by Armstrong Knox. Since Knox's death eight years ago, it has been led by his daughter, Estelle Knox, a woman with no criminal record. Harmonic Bliss has no website or email. It only distributes pamphlets on paper. There are few mentions of Harmonic Bliss on Internet forums and social media sites. Some former adherents say that it helped them, others say it did not.

Estelle Knox resides on a farm about a 30-minute drive from Leavenworth, Kansas, northwest of Kansas City. The farm is owned by Harmonic Bliss adherents James and Stacy Galworthy. Stacy Galworthy is a longtime graduate student at the University of Missouri–Kansas City's School of Biological Sciences. James Galworthy is a retired construction contractor who worked for decades in Leavenworth. They have an 18-year-old daughter named Meredith Galworthy.

Six months ago, the three Galworthys went missing. After friends and family reported the disappearance, the police opened an investigation. Since then, the Galworthys have not used credit cards, done any banking, made any phone calls, paid any bills, or interacted with social media. Knox claims that the Galworthys went on a long vacation and road trip and asked her to watch the farm. Police found no evidence of wrongdoing. The case went cold. Since the disappearance, Estelle Knox has invited other Harmonic Bliss devotees to stay with her on the Galworthy farm.

Delta Green has launched Operation WORMWOOD ARENA to investigate Harmonic Bliss and its connection to the unnatural sigil.

Survivors and Recruits

After playing "BLACKSAT," "Night Visions," and/or "Sick Again," your players may have a pool of survivors ready for recruitment by Delta Green. The *Handler's Guide* has details about recruitment, on page 264 for the Program and page 306 for the Outlaws. Use the recruitment process to piece together what happened to each new Agent between their last appearance and their briefing in "Wormwood Arena." Some guidelines:

- Each new Agent has been briefed multiple times on the critical importance of Delta Green's work and its secrecy.
- Each has learned a few ways to contact a single Delta Green representative, such as a case officer from the Program's Office of Operations.
- Each has been instructed to remember that smartphones and modern, lo-jacked cars leave permanent records of their communications and movements. That can lead to investigation and expose the threats they are fighting to suppress.
- Each has been warned to think like the criminals they are.

The text assumes they are the Program. If your version of Delta Green is the Outlaws, Francisco Seles and his colleague Odette Jackson comprise a cell that recently lost members and needs the aid of the players' Agents.

A "Kidnapping"

Operation WORMWOOD ARENA is supervised by Odette Jackson, a Delta Green veteran and a longtime FBI special agent. Jackson works in the Kansas City, Missouri, field office, overseeing Kansas and part of Missouri.

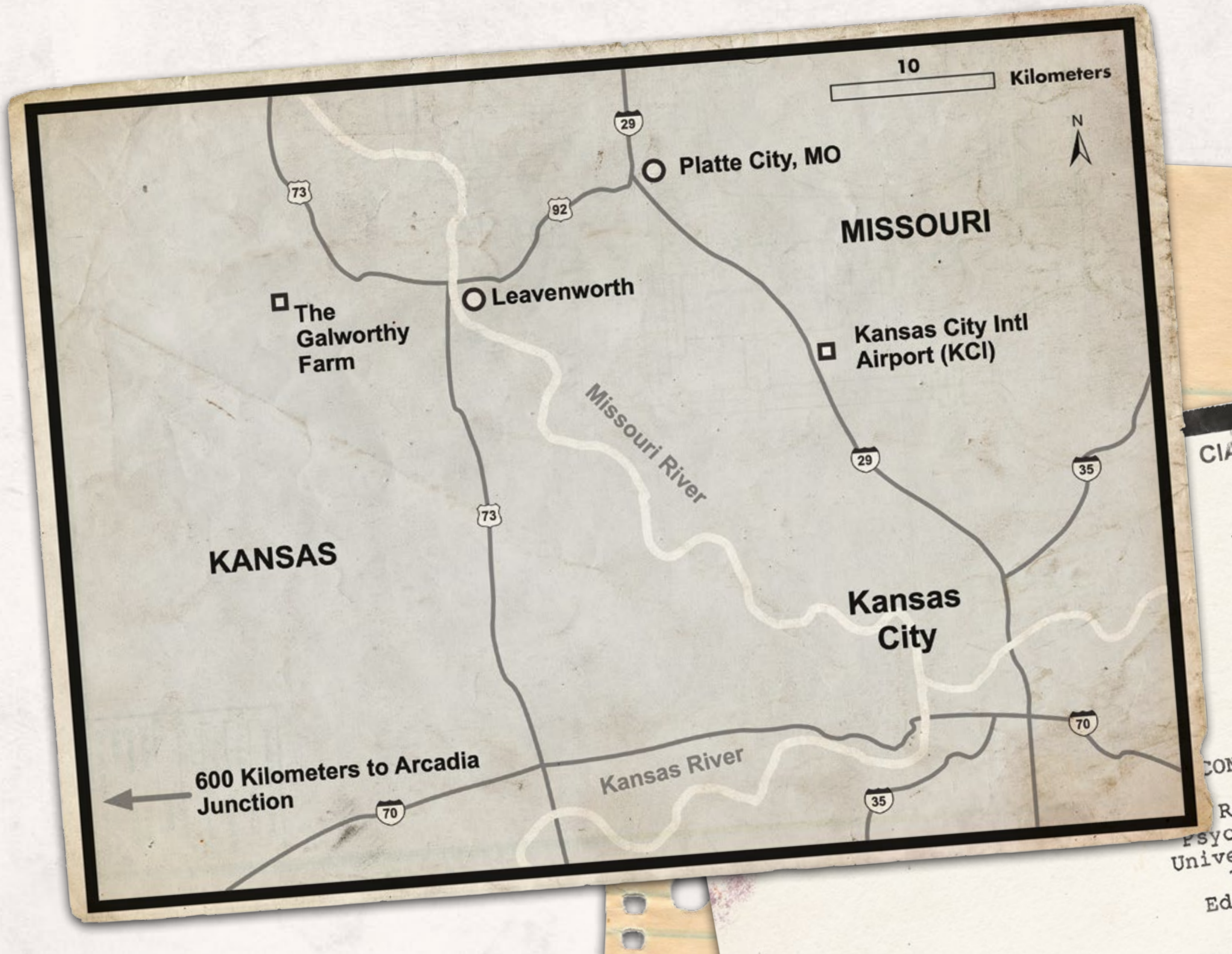
To provide a pretext for the operation, Jackson convinced the office's Special Agent in Charge to assert federal jurisdiction over the Galworthy case as a suspected multiple kidnapping. It was a hard sell. The Galworthys' disappearance becomes more suspicious as time goes by, but the likelihood of finding evidence leading to a conviction diminishes every day. The FBI needs to keep its conviction rate high and its expenditure of resources low. If the case is not swiftly resolved, Jackson's career will suffer.

Delta Green instructed Seles (the analyst who spotted the symbol) to assist Jackson. Seles and Jackson had worked together before. The Program arranged for him to be detached to the FBI on a temporary duty assignment. Over the next few days they conducted a preliminary investigation.

Meanwhile, Delta Green has tasked the players' Agents with infiltrating Harmonic Bliss to determine whether the cult is genuinely dangerous. Their core objective is the same as always: identify, neutralize, and conceal any unnatural threat.

They must also concoct mundane evidence to close out the Galworthy case for the FBI. That means finding or concocting evidence sufficient for the (non-Delta Green) U.S. Attorney's Office to arrest and swiftly convict a suspect; or presenting compelling evidence that the perpetrator was acting alone, has been positively identified, and is deceased; or else determining that no crime was committed.

No one has told the Agents what the symbol from the pamphlet means. That is need-to-know information. Even with their direct involvement, the Program says that the Agents do not need to know.


10
Kilometers
N
29
Platte City, MO
MISSOURI
73
92
Leavenworth
The Galworthy Farm
Kansas City Intl Airport (KCI)
Missouri River
29
35
73
KANSAS
Kansas City
70
600 Kilometers to Arcadia Junction
70
Kansas River
35
CIA
CON
R
Psyc
Unive
Ed

The Team Convenes

Odette Jackson (described on page 167) gathers the team in a cheap hotel room in Leavenworth, Kansas: their makeshift headquarters. This is on the books as an FBI investigation, but secrecy is critical. Jackson wants Delta Green discussions to happen away from government facilities. She explains everything contained in the **INTRODUCTION** on pages 126–127.

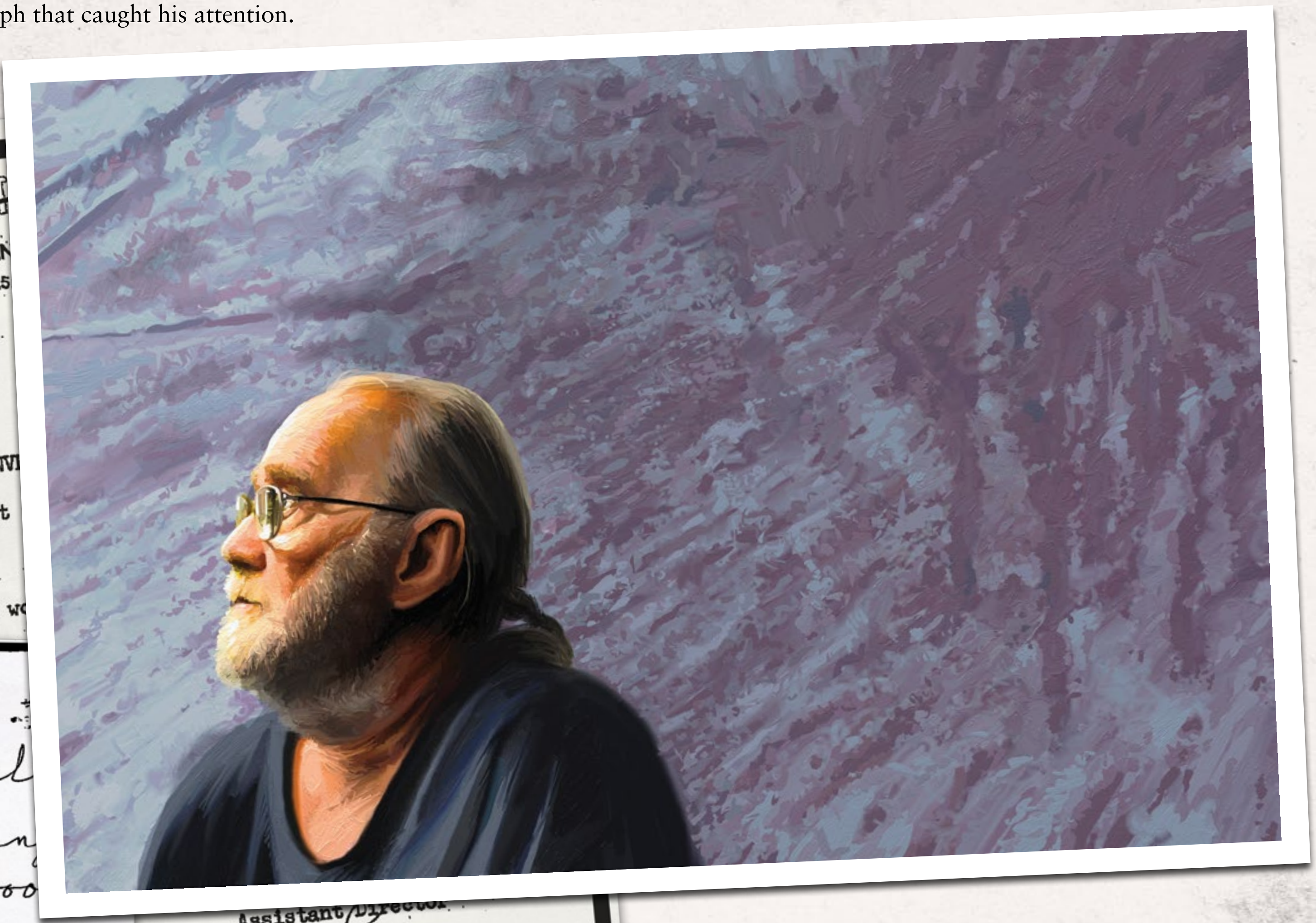
Jackson introduces them to Francisco Seles (see **FRANCISCO SELES** on page 167) and to one another, if necessary, by alias if the players prefer. Allow the Agents to interact a little. Jackson emphasizes that if something did happen to the Galworthys, the Agents may be the only hope of finding and saving them.

Jackson provides a copy of the pamphlet which attracted Delta Green's attention (see the Harmonic Bliss pamphlet on pages 172–173). She says it must be a recent pamphlet, since the phone number on it is the land line at the Galworthy farm. Seles points out the glyph that caught his attention.

The Informant

Preliminary investigation by Seles and Jackson yielded a man on the inside, Don Hocking (described on page 168). Hocking has been involved in Harmonic Bliss since the old days of Armstrong Knox. He recruited Stacy and James Galworthy. He now has suspicions about Estelle Knox, the founder's daughter and the group's current leader.

Four years ago, Stacy Galworthy started "getting visions." That was never a part of Harmonic Bliss practices and Don did not encourage it. Over time, the Galworthys became closer to Estelle Knox. Eight months ago, they invited Knox to live at their farm. Two months later, Knox claimed that James, Stacy, and Meredith went off on a suspiciously vague journey, leaving her to house-sit. She has since invited more Harmonic Bliss followers to stay with her for "intensive study." Hocking is ready to move in. He aims to take one or two undercover FBI agents as "new students" with him.



Don Hocking gives the team a good primer on Harmonic Bliss dogma; see **REPORT ON HARMONIC BLISS** on page 174. Jackson provides the Agents with a transcript of an earlier interview with Hocking. For the relevant portion, see **HOCKING INTERVIEW** on page 176.

Going Undercover

Jackson has planned this as a brief undercover operation. Estelle Knox has isolated herself at the Galworthy farm with a handful of devotees. Jackson wants one or two Agents to infiltrate the commune, confirm whether it has anything to do with unnatural forces, gather evidence that can be used to close the FBI case, and determine whether any of the Galworthys are alive and can be saved. Don Hocking has agreed to introduce the Agents as new recruits.

Infiltrating a cult requires a lengthy deception. The undercover Agents' job is to gain Estelle's trust. For the undercover operatives, Jackson picks one or two with the highest **HUMINT** and **Persuade** skills. If the candidates have good **Alertness, Stealth, Disguise, Forensics,** or **Law,** all the better.

Ask the players to invent their fake identities. The Program has supplied cursory credentials, with the usual warning that they are just for show and will not stand up to investigation. Before play begins, they've had a couple of good cram sessions to practice them.

If the Agents don't want to go that way and have a compelling alternative, Jackson listens. She wants them to have access to the farm without revealing the FBI investigation. She feels that other ways of gathering information, such as bugging the commune, have greater complications. If the Agents talk Jackson out of the undercover plan, you may need to drop or change much of what's in **GOING TO THE FARM,** on page 136, and skip straight to **INVESTIGATIONS** on page 141.

The Analyst

Francisco Seles was the analyst who first spotted the glyph, so Delta Green has kept him in the operation. As an NSA analyst, Seles does not typically work in the field. But no Delta Green operation is typical.

Seles helped Jackson conduct preliminary surveillance and interviews of Harmonic Bliss members. He and Jackson flipped Don Hocking, and he prepared reports summarizing Harmonic Bliss' history and practices for the other Agents.

Jackson has tasked Seles with monitoring communications with the undercover operatives from a van parked in woods a kilometer or two from the farm. He does not feel completely prepared for that role. If one of the player Agents has **SIGINT** at 40% or more—good enough to manage the technical side—and wants that job, Jackson and Seles agree to it.

About Harmonic Bliss

Hocking can answer questions about Harmonic Bliss.

JOINING: Hocking says Harmonic Bliss membership is open to anyone who signs up for an Omega Reading. That's typically given by Estelle Knox or a trusted devotee like himself. It uses an Omega Reader, a device designed by Armstrong Knox to gauge the seeker's harmony with the music of the cosmos.

MEETINGS: Each weekly attunement session starts with "body instrumentation practice," which is sort of a group hug and massage. After body instrumentation, members go off alone for a period of "pre-verbal meditation" to calm their minds and experience their emotions and intuitions more clearly. Finally, there's a group discussion of the issues and relationships in their lives and how Harmonic Bliss practices can help. This continues, indefinitely.

Another Omega Reading occurs after twelve months of purification and study, and after a ritual bath. This usually shows a much calmer reading, which is said to demonstrate that the sect's practices work.

TENETS: Harmonic Bliss teaches members to be compassionate, understanding and compliant. Behaviors encouraged by Harmonic Bliss include: singing, playing musical instruments, honestly communicating, dancing, compromising, experiencing nature, attending live musical performances, and doing anything Estelle Knox wants. Discouraged behaviors include: arguing, fighting, hitting, spending too much time alone, listening to too much recorded music, communicating over electronic media, and resisting those things that Estelle Knox wants.

THE COMMUNE: Until recently, Harmonic Bliss did not isolate its members from families, co-workers and friends. Five months ago, Estelle Knox invited members of Harmonic Bliss to move in with her at the Galworthy farm. Knox said that she had found a new way that benefited from exclusive dedication. Six of Knox's followers have joined the commune and left the rest of the world behind.

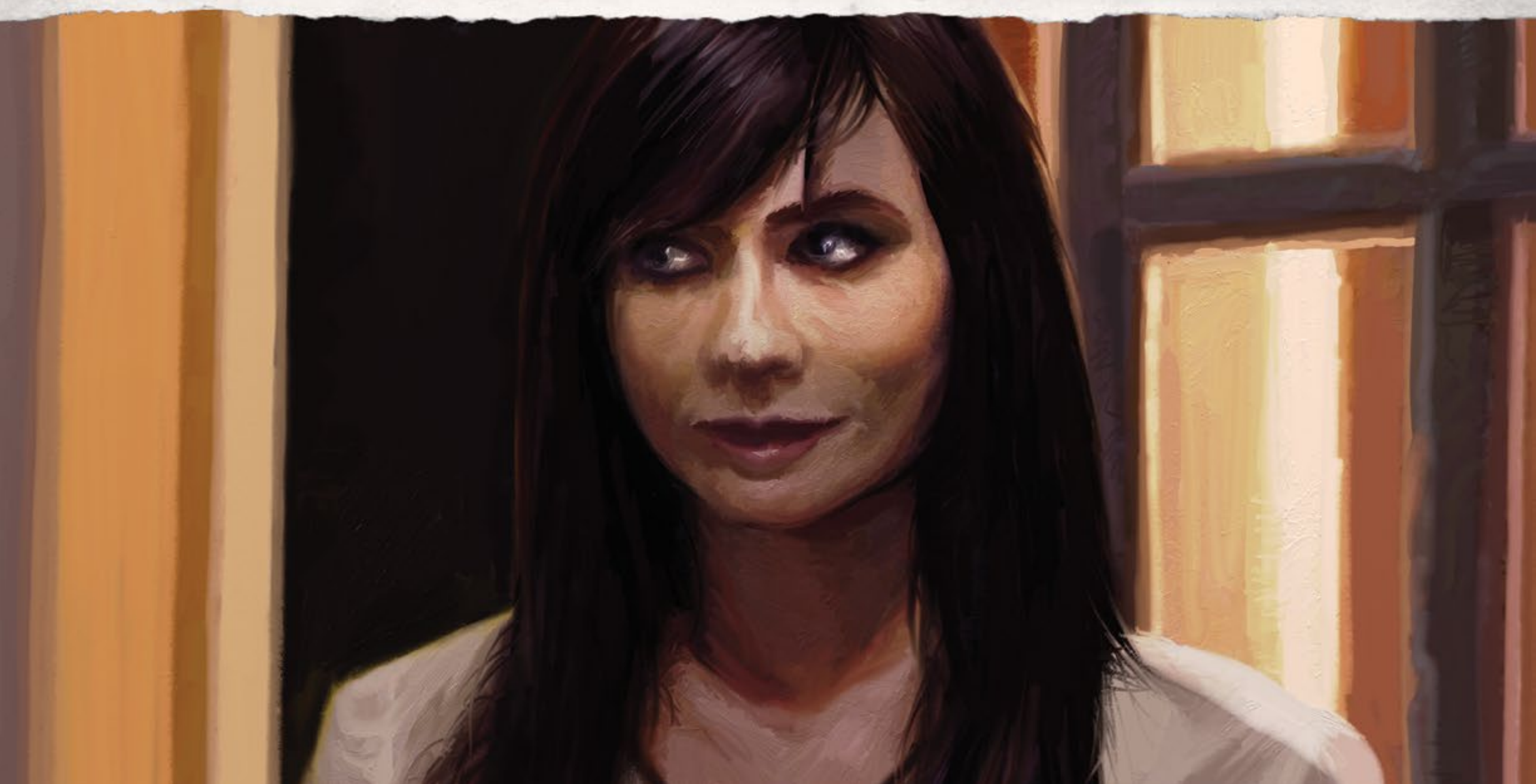
IS THIS FAMILIAR? Agents with **Occult** or **Psychotherapy** skill at 30% or higher recognize some of the techniques employed by Harmonic Bliss. If none have those skills, Francisco Seles fills them in from his research. Whatever the Omega Reader actually does, feelings of unhappiness and disconnection are common in people searching for a new religion. The affectionate "instrumentation" that opens each meeting sounds like the standard cult tactic of "love bombing" to make an adherent feel welcome and esteemed.

About Estelle Knox

Hocking describes Estelle Knox as energetic, well-organized, confident, and dedicated to the principles that her father laid down. She is more assertive than her father was when it comes to resolving "emotional harmonies" within the group. Armstrong Knox wanted people to get along. Estelle wants people to obey.

PHYSICAL ISSUES: If the Agents ask Hocking about Estelle Knox's health, he says she has a few strange symptoms. She sleeps very little and is often hyperactive. She is sometimes gripped by muscular seizures that travel along her limbs. She interprets these as signs from her ascended father, hints of the pulse of the universe itself, so she doesn't try to mask them. Her followers find it hard to argue against a woman who claims she's touched by the divine. An Agent with **Medicine** 60% or who succeeds at a roll suspects a possible thyroid condition.

SUSPICIONS: After the Galworthys disappeared, Don Hocking became suspicious. Reluctantly, he spoke to the police, but the investigation went nowhere. Like Hocking, the Galworthy parents had a flaky reputation, and had been talking excitedly to friends about "going on a trip." Meredith Galworthy—deeply shy, prone to stuttering, and the victim of frequent bullying before her parents switched her to home-schooling at age 13—had no close friends outside the home and shunned social media. Estelle Knox was well known as their close friend. Her assertion that they'd asked her to house-sit while they were gone was not ironclad, but no one could disprove it. When the local police dropped the case, Don Hocking decided he must have been overreacting. He started



going back to meetings. He even considered moving in at the commune. Then the FBI told him the disappearance was worth investigating after all. Hocking was eager to help.

Secret History

If not for a visit to Arcadia Junction, an abandoned Kansas town about 260 km west of Kansas City, Estelle Knox would only be a moderately tyrannical religious nut. Now she's on a far more destructive course. In Arcadia Junction, Estelle Knox discovered a huge, weird statue. But it wasn't a statue. It was an unnatural creature she calls Kaughrhun Kaal.

The *Pnakotic Manuscripts* describe beings of myth similar to Kaughrhun Kaal, beings that feed on humans that turn to stone when undernourished, though this creature is neither named nor described. Kaughrhun Kaal is physically dormant, with organo-silicate cells locked down in a rigid state. See **KAUGHRHUN KAAL** on page 170.

Kaughrhun Kaal thrives on two substances found on Earth: mammal blood and, through some weirdly specific process, the industrial solvent and gasoline additive methyl *tert*-butyl ether (MTBE). MTBE energizes Kaughrhun Kaal's brain and spore apparatus, while mammal blood permits it to elasticize its limbs and flesh.

When energized, Kaughrhun Kaal can emit spores. They're the foundation of its perceptions and the engines of its influence over humanity. If you get a few thousand of them in your eye, Kaughrhun Kaal can see what you see and hear what you hear at a great distance.

Moreover, in sufficient numbers the spores can unite into mini-manufactories, generating chemicals that influence human behavior. They mimic the effects of caffeine or alcohol or, more in greater concentrations, LSD, epinephrine or dopamine. If you inhale or ingest a large quantity of Kaughrhun Kaal spores, it can influence moods and physical reactions. This effect is not precise, but it is powerful. Kaughrhun Kaal can send telepathic orders to infested units, or receive messages from them, anywhere on Earth.

Luckily for mankind, its ability to *spread* spores is limited. If it stood atop a hill in a high wind, spores might drift 15 km before settling, but only the area 8 km downwind would get enough to form sense arrays.

In addition to its spores, the entity makes use of a spell, for lack of a better word, that Estelle calls the "Glyph of Harmony" (See **THE GLYPH OF HARMONY** on page 150). The spores let Kaughrhun Kaal change your mood. The glyph lets it mess with your brain. Using both at once lets it infuse you with unnatural affection. (The glyph is the image copied on the brochure, but it's powerless when inscribed by human means. It is listed in some crusty old books as "Ye Averturus Sign".)

Awakenings

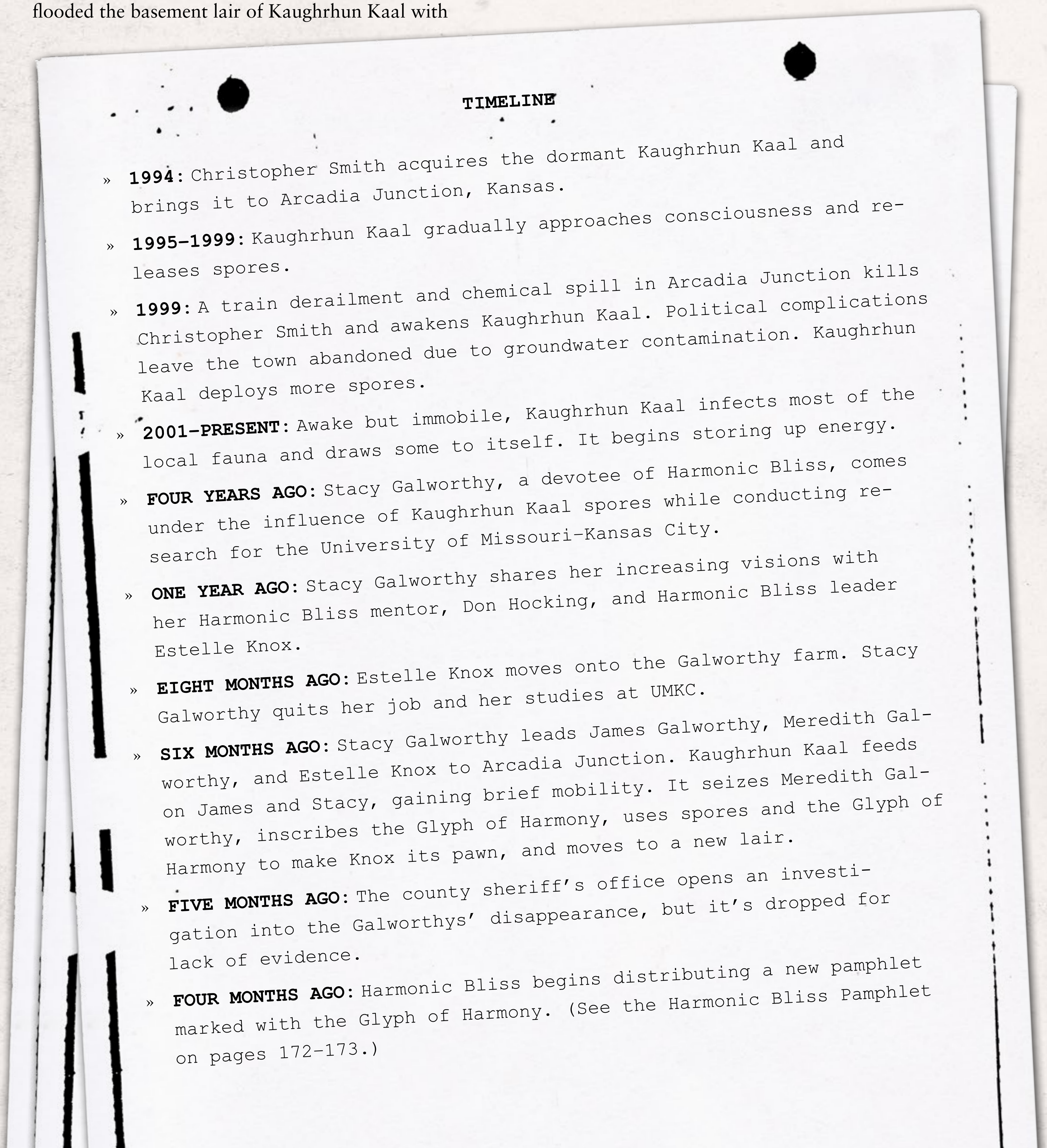
The provenance of Kaughrhun Kaal before 1994 is unknown, but that year it came into the hands of Christopher Smith of the tiny, isolated town of Arcadia Junction. How and why Smith acquired Kaughrhun Kaal are unknown. He lived and died alone and never displayed it.

Smith owned a gas station near the railroad tracks. There, the entity was luckless when it came to getting blood, but its position in Smith's basement, right next to his gas station, allowed it to absorb trace amounts of MTBE from the air. As it absorbed loose MTBE molecules, Kaughrhun Kaal went from utter thoughtlessness to a state of foggy, grudging intentionality. In that state, Kaughrhun Kaal influenced Smith. It gave him chemical rewards when he looked at it, and chemical dismay when he was away from it for any length of time. It also made him fond of the smell of gasoline. Eventually, the combination led him to use gasoline to clean Kaughrhun Kaal.

The gasoline bath gave Kaughrhun Kaal enough focus to manipulate Smith's feelings with greater cunning. It was still paralyzed, though, so it could not inscribe the Glyph of Harmony. Smith may have been a coward, a man of firm ethics, or just not bright enough to put the pieces together. Whatever the reason, he never realized he was supposed to perform a blood sacrifice for the statue.

Smith's spore-fueled chemical imbalance did make him deeply unhappy and confused. In 1999, when Kaughrhun Kaal sensed the approach of a large quantity of MTBE, it hit Smith with a wave of despair, relieved only when he looked at his truck and the train tracks. That hint, he got.

The collision and derailment killed Smith and the three workers aboard the train. Ruptured tankers flooded the basement lair of Kaughrhun Kaal with spilled MTBE, ensuring that Kaughrhun Kaal could remain conscious for decades. In a stroke of bad luck for the creature, an even greater quantity of even more toxic trichloroethylene (TCE) also spilled. Political complications from the spill ensured that the region would be empty of human victims for years. (See **EPA POLLUTION REPORT** on page 175.)



TIMELINE

» **1994:** Christopher Smith acquires the dormant Kaughrhun Kaal and brings it to Arcadia Junction, Kansas.

» **1995–1999:** Kaughrhun Kaal gradually approaches consciousness and releases spores.

» **1999:** A train derailment and chemical spill in Arcadia Junction kills Christopher Smith and awakens Kaughrhun Kaal. Political complications leave the town abandoned due to groundwater contamination. Kaughrhun Kaal deploys more spores.

» **2001–PRESENT:** Awake but immobile, Kaughrhun Kaal infects most of the local fauna and draws some to itself. It begins storing up energy.

» **FOUR YEARS AGO:** Stacy Galworthy, a devotee of Harmonic Bliss, comes under the influence of Kaughrhun Kaal spores while conducting research for the University of Missouri–Kansas City.

» **ONE YEAR AGO:** Stacy Galworthy shares her increasing visions with her Harmonic Bliss mentor, Don Hocking, and Harmonic Bliss leader Estelle Knox.

» **EIGHT MONTHS AGO:** Estelle Knox moves onto the Galworthy farm. Stacy Galworthy quits her job and her studies at UMKC.

» **SIX MONTHS AGO:** Stacy Galworthy leads James Galworthy, Meredith Galworthy, and Estelle Knox to Arcadia Junction. Kaughrhun Kaal feeds on James and Stacy, gaining brief mobility. It seizes Meredith Galworthy, inscribes the Glyph of Harmony, uses spores and the Glyph of Harmony to make Knox its pawn, and moves to a new lair.

» **FIVE MONTHS AGO:** The county sheriff's office opens an investigation into the Galworthys' disappearance, but it's dropped for lack of evidence.

» **FOUR MONTHS AGO:** Harmonic Bliss begins distributing a new pamphlet marked with the Glyph of Harmony. (See the Harmonic Bliss Pamphlet on pages 172–173.)

To the very limited extent that its emotions parallel those of humans, Kaughrhun Kaal was horribly frustrated. It could infect and manipulate any number of squirrels, rats and stray dogs, but they lacked the intelligence to help restore it to full mobility. It could only condition some predators to prefer feeding while they touch it, and in this fashion received tiny doses of blood. It began storing up energy.

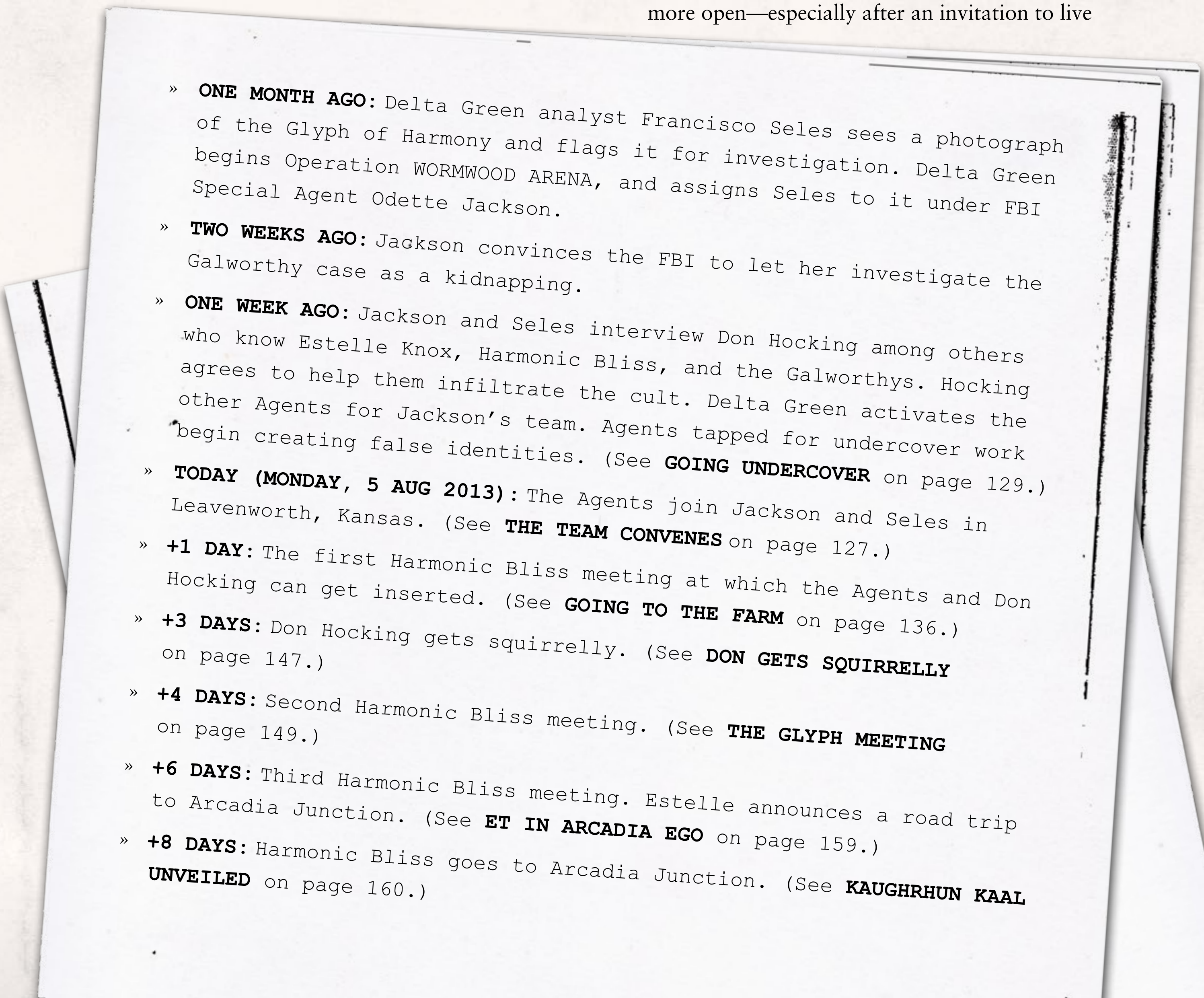
It needed servants with leverage, manipulating digits, and initiative. It needed slaves that could anticipate its needs and navigate the complicated culture that surrounds it. It needed humans.

The Pawn

Kaughrhun Kaal might have remained paralyzed for ages if not for Stacy Galworthy, a hapless middle-aged grad student from the University of Missouri–Kansas City. She collected one of Kaughrhun Kaal's spore puffs for testing and mislabeled it as an immature *Volvariella bombycina* fungus. The next day, as Galworthy examined the spore at the lab, it burst. A high concentration of spores went into her eyes and nasal cavity. Soon, Kaughrhun Kaal could see through her eyes and manipulate her brain.

Kaughrhun Kaal immediately, patiently set about leading Galworthy to it. It took four years of positive and negative chemical reinforcement to draw her to Arcadia Junction. As Kaughrhun Kaal deployed euphoric intoxicants into Stacy's system, she gradually rationalized it as a sign that Harmonic Bliss was working.

Galworthy's friend Don Hocking was not willing to reconfigure his entire faith in accordance with Stacy's spore-based euphoria. Estelle Knox proved more open—especially after an invitation to live



- **ONE MONTH AGO:** Delta Green analyst Francisco Seles sees a photograph of the Glyph of Harmony and flags it for investigation. Delta Green begins Operation WORMWOOD ARENA, and assigns Seles to it under FBI Special Agent Odette Jackson.
- **TWO WEEKS AGO:** Jackson convinces the FBI to let her investigate the Galworthy case as a kidnapping.
- **ONE WEEK AGO:** Jackson and Seles interview Don Hocking among others who know Estelle Knox, Harmonic Bliss, and the Galworthys. Hocking agrees to help them infiltrate the cult. Delta Green activates the other Agents for Jackson's team. Agents tapped for undercover work begin creating false identities. (See **GOING UNDERCOVER** on page 129.)
- **TODAY (MONDAY, 5 AUG 2013):** The Agents join Jackson and Seles in Leavenworth, Kansas. (See **THE TEAM CONVENES** on page 127.)
- **+1 DAY:** The first Harmonic Bliss meeting at which the Agents and Don Hocking can get inserted. (See **GOING TO THE FARM** on page 136.)
- **+3 DAYS:** Don Hocking gets squirrelly. (See **DON GETS SQUIRRELLY** on page 147.)
- **+4 DAYS:** Second Harmonic Bliss meeting. (See **THE GLYPH MEETING** on page 149.)
- **+6 DAYS:** Third Harmonic Bliss meeting. Estelle announces a road trip to Arcadia Junction. (See **ET IN ARCADIA EGO** on page 159.)
- **+8 DAYS:** Harmonic Bliss goes to Arcadia Junction. (See **KAUGHRHUN KAAL UNVEILED** on page 160.)

with the Galworthys, rent-free. When Knox moved in, Stacy Galworthy quit school—by then she was in the doctoral program—and her job as a university lab technician. She, her husband, and their daughter devoted themselves full time to Harmonic Bliss and to exploring Stacy's "melodious intuitions."

Stacy Galworthy realized her moments of greatest ecstasy occurred whenever she heard the words "Arcadia Junction." She shared this with her husband James and felt an intense thrill when he discussed going there. Naturally, they invited their daughter Meredith and Estelle Knox to share the discovery that Stacy's melodious intuitions had revealed. They drove to Arcadia Junction and found Kaughrhun Kaal.

Kaughrhun Kaal used the five minutes of activity it had hoarded over the years to kill Stacy and James Galworthy for their nutritious blood, and to seize Meredith Galworthy as a long-term source of energy. It spared Knox. It does not understand English (though it knows that "Arcadia Junction" is the string of sounds that means where it is now), but it could tell that Stacy Galworthy admired and deferred to Knox by measuring hormone levels in her blood. It could tell that Knox would be useful.

It doped Estelle Knox to subdue her while it carved a Glyph of Harmony onto a plate of the house's concrete foundation. Then it sent a dose of adrenaline to wake her up, along with GABA and oxytocin to keep her mellow and receptive while she gazed at the glyph. It warped her memories until she believed that the Galworthys achieved some kind of mystic apotheosis.

Now, she is the entity's pawn.

Estelle Knox left with a head full of scrambled memories, the Glyph of Harmony, a supply of Kaughrhun Kaal spores, and a slowly rising urge to gather more worshippers. Kaughrhun Kaal moved to a different ruined house, dug itself a basement cave-temple, arranged the crushed remains of the dead Galworthys under itself like a nest, and attached Meredith Galworthy to itself, using its energy to keep her alive and her increasingly diluted blood to keep itself awake.

Two-Session Overview

"Wormwood Arena" often works best as a two-session operation, with the infiltration in session one and the resolution at the superfund site in session two.

Session One: The Galworthy Farm

The operation opens with the Agents going undercover at the Galworthy farm in order to gain the confidence of religious seekers who seem harmless or even benign on the surface. Initially, the only suspicious elements are (1) the absence of the Galworthys and (2) the presence of a suspect glyph on the Harmonic Bliss pamphlet.

Session one is investigative. The Agents gather data and try to make sense of it. There's a lot there, and not all of it is relevant. *That is deliberate*. It is intended to confuse and overwhelm the players until they sort through it, pull the threads, and get a grip on what's really going on.

It can help to divide the information they can get in the first session into core clues and auxiliary clues.

CORE CLUES: These are needed to get to Arcadia Junction and confront the alien horror. One way or another, these come out. There are three core clues.

- *Estelle Knox's weird spores*. The Agents can get this just by passively being present at the ceremonies. If they show initiative and steal a sample, they can learn more, or non-undercover Agents can get samples from the research that Stacy abandoned.
- *Estelle Knox's unnatural glyph*. Again, all they have to do to learn this is show up, but again, those who explore more can learn more.
- *Estelle's source for at least one of those things is Arcadia Junction and she wants to go back*. As with all these clues, it's not hard to learn if they just keep their heads down and stay in character at Harmonic Bliss, but they could also learn that Stacy Galworthy got hold of weird spores in Arcadia Junction before she went missing.

As soon as your Agents know these three things, they can be led or sent to Arcadia Junction in session two. If you've been playing session one for hours and people are getting fed up, you can wind it down as soon as they know those three things.

AUXILIARY CLUES: These aren't necessary to get the Agents to the final horror, but they provide background, they're interesting, and they may also inform the Agents' decisions about how to survive the final confrontation. There are three auxiliary clues.

- *The Pnakotic Entities report*. This report suggests that blood is needed for these statue-like beings to become mobile. If they read this and realize their opponent may *literally* be out for blood, that too can lead them to wiser tactical choices. They access this report by asking Delta Green and insisting they need to know more about the Averturus glyph from the pamphlet. This document references SENECA WHIRLWIND. You might pass along the SENECA WHIRLWIND report at the same time, or wait to see if their Agents request it—if your players already seem to have too much data to process, hold back the report or send it in later. If they're hungry for information, give it all at once.
- *The SENECA WHIRLWIND report*. This suggests they might be dealing with something that cannot be harmed with commonplace weapons. Citing the report when asking for rocket launchers or grenades can improve their chances of getting them, as described on page 177 in **THE SENECA WHIRLWIND REPORT**. They get this if they ask about SENECA WHIRLWIND, or possibly it just gets sent along with the Pnakotic Entities file.
- *Stacy Galworthy's research*. This is an alternate avenue to finding both the weirdness of the spores, and the location of their origin. They can learn about this by doing legwork, going over Stacy Galworthy's old life before she vanished.

Splitting the Party

Normally, the Handler presents some information or a decision, the Agents react, and the Handler adjudicates how their choices and dice outcomes impact the situation. But with a split party and many narratives, the Handler and players might be distracted.

When your party is split, you can put the current players in suspense *instantly* just by switching the narrative over to the others. When someone from Harmonic Bliss hugs an Agent and finds the wire leading to her earpiece, *that's* when you cut away to the other players. The Blissite says, "What's *this*?" and then, before the player can answer, you turn to the other player and say, "So, you were going to the courthouse to follow up the Knox family's paper trail, right?"

Cut away at the brink of danger, and two things happen. One is that the player sweats for the longest possible time. That's good! But, almost as valuable, they *also* get a chance to come up with a clever ruse to get out of trouble.

Anything else they might learn, from background on the Blissites to the origin of the Kaughrhun Kaal "statue," is interesting and evocative, but it's not the most important thing. Focus on the three core clues, and let the Agents dig up the three auxiliary clues if they work for them.

Session Two: Arcadia Junction

The second session is much more straightforward. Once Agents are on the ground in Arcadia Junction, confrontation with the uncanny is all but certain. The only issue is pacing, which is addressed below.

Compared to the slow pace of investigation and analysis, this can seem like a sudden transition, so when you start the second session, introduce it gradually. Sum up what everyone learned at the Galworthy farm. Then make sure you have a good idea of where the Agents are as they roll onto the scene, what they're carrying, and what their plans are, and only then devastate their reality.

Going to the Farm

This section assumes one or two Agents go undercover to the commune accompanied by Don Hocking. If the players change Jackson's plan, adjust as needed.

As the team approaches the farm, Hocking turns into a sweaty mess, but he holds it together as well as he can. An Agent with at least 50% **HUMINT** can try to calm him down, but it requires a **Persuade** test. Or any Agent can attempt a **Psychotherapy** test at +20%. If either roll succeeds, Hocking is back to normal when they arrive. Otherwise he's still troubled. Hocking doesn't blow their cover, but use his mistakes and palpable discomfort to make the players worry.

The Galworthy Farm

The Galworthy farm is not quite 10 km northeast of the rural village of McLouth, Kansas (home to one of the longest-running threshing bees in the nation!). It's about a half-hour drive west of Leavenworth or 45 minutes northwest of Kansas City. It is 16 hectares (40 acres) of fields and a few trees that stand around a creek. It is a hobby farm, not a working farm, but there still is plenty of work to do; tending organic vegetables, chickens, and two goats.

The two-story farmhouse has six bedrooms and three baths. It is not luxurious but it's large, 1950s vintage and well maintained. It has an uneasy blend of country decor (rusted antique tools as found-art objects, gingham check, prints of horsey landscapes) and New Age (Tibetan weavings, pastel abstracts, geodes). Estelle Knox's influence can be seen mostly in her bedroom and in the root cellar, where crates of books are stacked. Her furniture is there, too, mostly cheap Nineties particleboard and a few sturdy, workmanlike antiques.

First Impressions

The undercover insertion is an open meeting, at which the undercover Agents have Don Hocking as an escort. Luckily, a few other new joiners are also coming to their first meeting at the Galworthy farm.

Estelle Knox greets every arrival at the door. The Maestro of Harmonic Bliss is a pale, energetic woman with protruding eyes who tends to shake hands a little too long.

She asks each arrival to turn off their cell phones and other electronic devices—even digital watches and health monitors—and put them in a basket for safekeeping.

Knox is not crazy, or at least she wasn't before she became a thrall of Kaughrhun Kaal. In Harmonic Bliss,

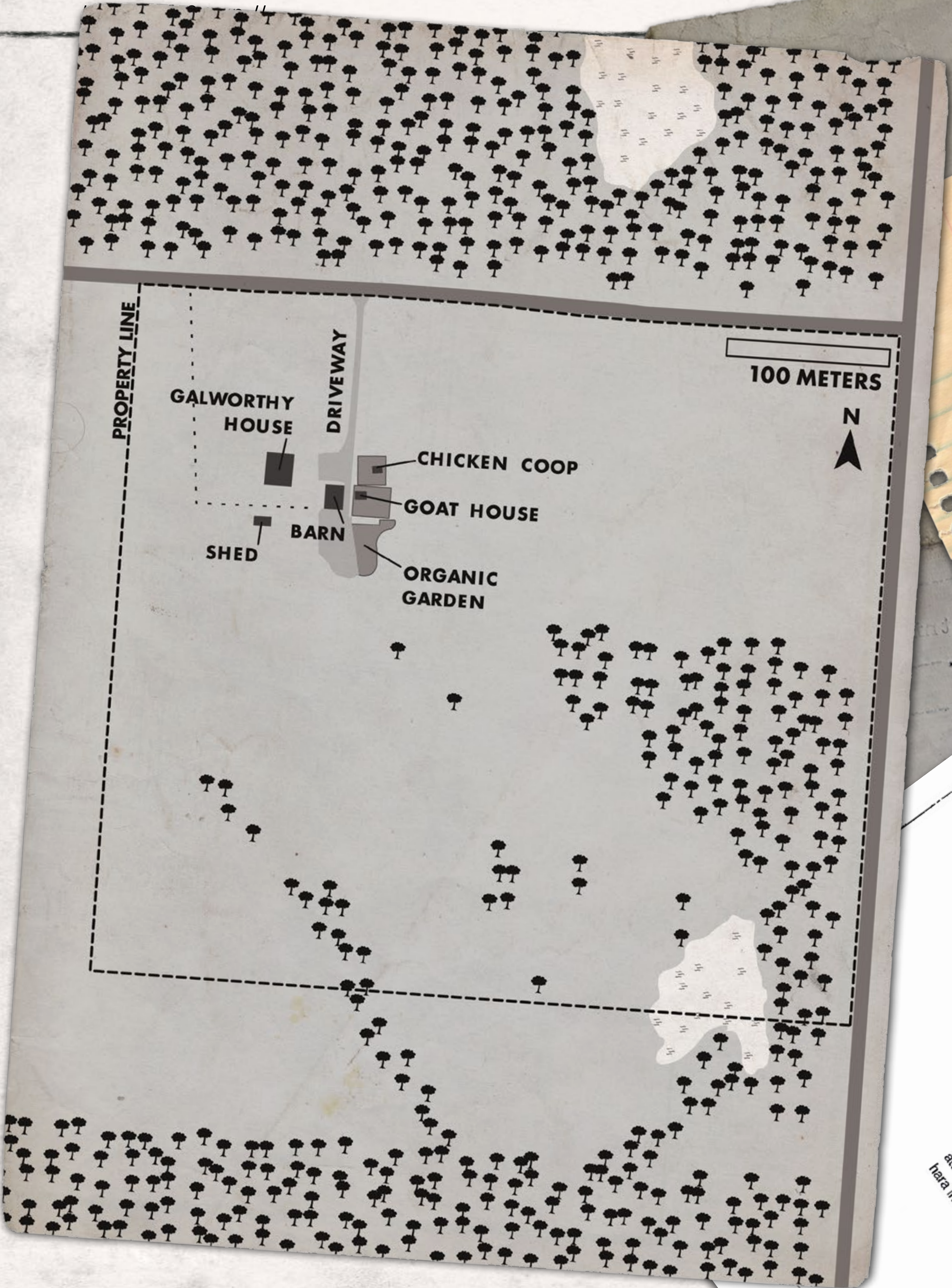
Players Cool Their Heels

Sometimes the issue isn't too much going on, but not enough. If three of your five players are not undercover, don't let them stop paying attention. Here are two things they can do to enhance the game.

OUT-OF-CHARACTER RESEARCH: This operation has a lot of handouts. When a character is offscreen, that's an ideal time for a player to read them or start sticking stuff on a whiteboard and drawing connections. That way, when the undercover characters come back, there are theories to test against their observations.

SUPPORT ROLES: If the characters go in miked and wearing earpieces, one of the players on the outside can sit behind four different computer screens, looking up information that might make Estelle, Brandon or someone else in Harmonic Bliss feel easier about the undercover agent.

All these options are covered in deeper detail below, under the **INVESTIGATIONS** heading on page 141. But often, you can get them back in just by turning to them and saying, "OK, what's your character doing now to move things forward?" or "What does your Agent make of all this so far?"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Going In Wired

Don Hocking strongly recommends against anyone wearing a wire. Harmonic Bliss involves a lot of hugging and touching, so getting made is a real risk. Some members of Harmonic Bliss were questioned by county investigators months ago and FBI agents only weeks ago. They are alert.

If an Agent wears a microphone anyway, secretly make a **Disguise** roll and a **SIGINT** roll for the Agent.

If the **Disguise** roll fails, someone at the farm notices the wire. See **BLOWN COVER** on page 147.

If the **SIGINT** roll fails, the measures taken to keep it from being found muffle it too much to get a good signal.

If both rolls succeed, the Agents get a record of everything they heard.

she found a structure that justified leading by intuition and command that suited her even better than it did her father.

On the other hand, she's not well. Her symptoms include insomnia, hyperactivity, heat intolerance, smooth skin, and protruding eyes. An Agent with **Medicine** 40% or who succeeds at a roll suspects a mild hyperthyroidal condition after observing her symptoms firsthand. It has never been diagnosed. Knox shrugs it off if the Agents suggest it. Thanks to the benefits of Harmonic Bliss, she says, she has little use for traditional medicine.

Decide in advance how you want to play Estelle.

If she's a trippy, bug-eyed naïf, vague questions about "spirit guardians" or "energy intelligences" are met with vivacious enthusiasm and hints that she knows more.

If she's a cryptic drama queen, she skews more towards gnomic hints that she knows more than she can, at present, reveal.

There's one inflexible element of Estelle's personality: She is genuine. She believes she has a tangible line to a better way to live, something that can improve *all humanity*. Evidence and logic to the contrary won't shift her confidence. She has directly experienced the sublime. Mere words are not going to hold a candle to whatever the spores did to her brain.

The central questions for the first meeting are:

- Do the undercover Agents make a good impression?
- Less likely, do they blow their cover?
- Whom do they meet?
- What do they do?

Omega Readings

Before the meeting, Estelle Knox asks everyone to welcome their new visitors. She says that Harmonic Bliss encourages each newcomer to sit for an Omega Reading, so they have a baseline idea of the newcomer's state of harmony. Are they ready?

If the Agents decline, Knox doesn't force the issue. But that kind of resistance makes the seeker seem an unlikely candidate for Harmonic Bliss. Combined with other cues—such as Hocking's nervousness—it could increase suspicions.

The Omega Reader is a head-sized wooden frame embedded with quartz crystals, holding a glass screen, a speaker, some knobs and four wires with electrodes emerging from it. It runs on "D" batteries, which Knox removes when she puts the device away.

Knox connects electrodes to the seeker's hands and temples, then turns on the reader's power. She asks the seeker to close his or her eyes, be calm, and feel the silent music around them. Then she slowly turns another knob.

On the screen, the wavering lines of an oscilloscope appear. The speakers emit a heavy, unpleasant squall. Estelle Knox smiles sadly. She says the Omega Reader indicates disharmonies in the seeker's spirit.

Knox asks a series of leading questions, keyed towards attitude and body language. Does the seeker feel unhappy with the important things in his or her life? Why? Is the seeker dissatisfied with any of his or her deepest relationships? How? Does the seeker feel disconnected and alone?

Knox's goal is to get the newcomer to vocalize. She says many seekers find themselves in disharmony with the music of the world. That echoes into

The Machine

An Agent with 20% or higher in **Medicine** or any electronics-related **Craft** or **Science** skill, or who succeeds at a roll, suspects that the Omega Reader simply measures the electrical conductivity of skin. Seeing the more steady readings on Debbie Amstutz, just out of a long, hot bath, confirms the suspicion.

their relationships, attitudes, and moods. Attunement sessions with Harmonic Bliss, she assures them, can resolve these disharmonies.

Conversations With Estelle

There are two ways to get in Knox's good graces.

SHARING THEIR PROBLEMS: A **HUMINT** roll while talking to Knox observes that she's eager to hear about disharmony. If the Agents play that up, they get her particular attention. She encourages them to really bare their misery about whatever issue they've come up with—infidelity, money problems, family issues, etc. Estelle Knox loves a good soap opera, so Agents who really ham it up get a +20% ongoing bonus to **CHA** and **Persuade** rolls with her. She relaxes around them, invites them back, and is unlikely to think they might be FBI agents investigating the Galworthys. They can poke around the house and won't arouse her suspicion.

SHARING MUSIC: The other thing that can get Knox on the Agents' side right away is attempting to use a music-related **Art** skill during the touch and hum phase of the proceedings. Even if the Agent has no points in the skill, she appreciates the attempt—but she is concerned that they're evincing "tremendous personal disharmony," which she takes very seriously and offers to help resolve.

ABOUT KAUGHRHUN KAAL—NOTHING: Regardless of what the Agents do, *Knox says nothing about her encounter with Kaughrhun Kaal.* First off, she doesn't want competition in the role of "most evolved high priestess." Secondly, she realizes that even if she tries to communicate what she's experienced, it's so encumbered by hallucinatory imagery and religio-musical jargon that there's nothing of real substance to be said. Words can't contain the concept.

Debbie's Reading

While Estelle Knox gives the Agents their initial Omega Readings, a Blissite named Debbie Amstutz is upstairs, harmonizing with the cosmos in a ritual hot bath. As the Agents finish their readings, she dresses and comes downstairs.

Amstutz is a plain, portly divorcée in her mid-forties. She was in a bad spot when she came to Harmonic Bliss a year ago. Estelle Knox gave her a helping hand. A month ago, Amstutz quit her job at the Kansas City Health Department, moved in at the Galworthy farm, and put her savings and retirement accounts at Estelle Knox's disposal.

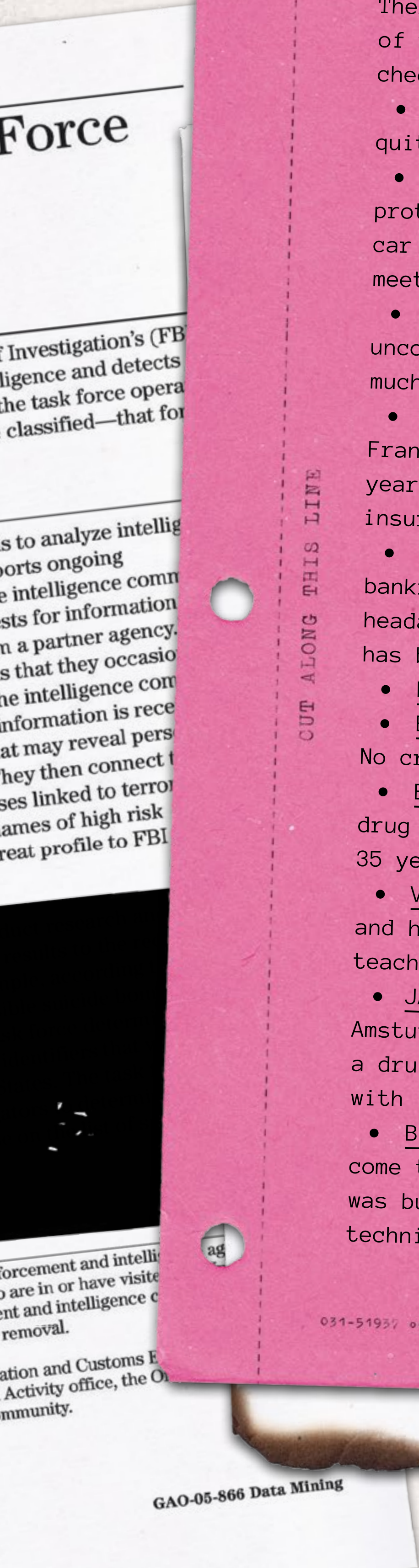
The other Blissful observe in rapt, affectionate attention as the Omega Reader shows much calmer results than it showed for the Agents. Knox smilingly congratulates Debbie for her progress, and thanks her for sharing her harmony with the group.

Debbie thanks Estelle Knox and the group. She says Harmonic Bliss saved her life. Amstutz has taken to heart all the virtues that Knox espouses for her followers: calmness, cheerful compliance, compromise, self-effacement, and obedience.

Attunement

The meeting's attunement session starts with "body instrumentation practice," a wordless, semi-musical freeform massage. There's lot of hugging, but any expression of sexuality is frowned upon and rejected as the participants move away and vocally buzz out of tune.

After body instrumentation, members isolate themselves (in different rooms, behind screens when there's a large group) for "pre-verbal meditation," during which they quietly mutter and hum, attempting to silence the conscious and verbal parts of their "analyzing mind" so that they can attune to the "experiencing self." A Harmonic Bliss veteran like Don Hocking or Debbie Amstutz accompanies each newcomer to guide them, then leaves the newcomer alone to meditate.



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THE BLISSITES

There are eleven Harmonic Bliss adherents at the first meeting, seven of whom live at the farm. Agents in the van can run background checks on these folks without any kind of roll.

- DEBBIE AMSTUTZ is a farm resident, age 43 years. She recently quit the Kansas City Health Department. No criminal record.
- STAN CAPRA is 62, was arrested when he was 24 at an anti-nuclear protest in California. Retired on disability five years ago after a car crash. Before that, he was a metalworker. Widower. Commutes to meetings.
- RONALD FITTS is staying at the farm. He's 19, has an uncorrected cleft palate and a speech impediment so he doesn't talk much. No criminal record. No employer of record.
- KEIKO FRANKS is 43, born Keiko Mishima, took her husband Jonas Franks' name when they got married and kept it after he died three years ago. No criminal record. Commutes to meetings. Works in an insurance office.
- BRENDA KEENING is 39 and living at the farm. No arrests. Went bankrupt seven years ago. Currently unemployed. Has gotten cluster headaches from bright lights since she was a teen, though no doctor has been able to diagnose the reason.
- ESTELLE KNOX See **First Impressions** on page 136.
- ELIZABETH MITCHELL is 51, recently divorced, living at the farm. No criminal record. Works as a tax accountant.
- BRANDON MURPHY See pages 141 and 148. Brandon has two minor drug convictions (LSD and MDMA) and a count of public nuisance. He's 35 years old and staying at the farm. No listed employer.
- VIVICA POSEIDON is a commuter. She was born Jessy-Anne Lingstrom and had her name legally changed. She's 23. No priors. She's a piano teacher.
- JANET RAMIREZ is staying at the farm, sharing a room with Amstutz. She's 31, and when she was 22 she killed another driver in a drunk driving incident. She's very open about that, and struggles with it at the meetings. She works retail.
- BEAUREGARD SMITH commutes to meetings. He's 31, struggling to come to grips with being gay and being rejected by his family. He was busted for shoplifting at age 22 and did community service. Does technical support for Verizon.

CUT ALONG THIS LINE

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During preverbal meditation, the Blissful are very distracted. If the Agents take that opportunity to look around, see **SEARCHING THE HOUSE** on page 141.

After meditation, some Blissites say they could feel a connection with the music of the universe beyond. Others, suggestible by nature, agree.

An unusually sensitive Agent who participates in both attunement and meditation senses it, too. The Agent even has a dreamlike glimpse of some small, abandoned midwestern town. The Agent somehow intuits the presence there of Meredith Galworthy—and feels the presence of something else, something potent with lurking power. An "unusually sensitive" Agent is one with **POW** 14 or higher, or with **POW** 12 or higher as well as either **INT** 12 or higher, **Occult** 50% or higher, any **Art** skill at 50% or higher, or **Unnatural** 10% or higher.

Discussion

Once the Blissites' thoughts are clear, the final segment is a chatty discussion of relationships with everyone in their lives, covering what works and what doesn't, with an emphasis on how Harmonic Bliss helps.

After a couple of hours, the meeting winds up. The Blissites part with hugs. Some of them return to their cars, singing or humming to themselves. A handful remain at the house.

Brandon Murphy

Brandon Murphy is one of the live-in members of Harmonic Bliss, along with Debbie Amstutz, Estelle Knox and four others. The Agents encounter him along with the rest during the first meeting, but he deliberately does nothing to stand out or catch their attention. He only greets them with superficial warmth and charm.

Crashing At the Farm

Asking to move in after only a single attunement session is pretty sudden, and requires a **Persuade** test. Estelle Knox believes in fate; if the Agents succeed with an **Occult** test, they get a +20% bonus to the **Persuade** test. If the **Persuade** test fails, Knox is suspicious, but assumes they may just have nowhere else to go. She lets them stay, but later **Persuade** rolls with her are at a −20% penalty until they convince her they're genuine. If the **Persuade** test is a fumble, Knox believes they may be reporters or police.

Debriefing

After the first meeting, if the Agents leave the farm they can meet the others and discuss what's going on.

Be careful with the pacing. The debriefing shouldn't take up more than a few minutes. This is when the characters are going to develop theories and generate strategies. Encourage them to argue only in character and push the team leader to quickly decide on a course of action.

Investigations

Agents who aren't undercover are almost certain to attempt some, or many, of the following actions. Even Agents who are inserted undercover may do some of this between the first meeting and the eventful second meeting. Some teams may even go so far as to wave off undercover work entirely and just watch Estelle Knox and her followers from afar.

Remember to keep the pacing tight. If a player is floundering, switch to another Agent while they think about what they're going to do. If all else fails, remind them that (1) the mark on the pamphlet is the most suspicious thing, (2) the Galworthy disappearances are alarming and (3) their job is to gather information and organize that data into theories.

Searching the House

During the first meeting, the best time to search the house is during the "preverbal solo meditation," since everyone who might spot them is off on their own, humming and drumming. The ambient noise provides a nice cover for movements, and most of the people who might spot them are loud enough that the Agents can pinpoint their location before entering the room. If they start before, they need to roll for **Stealth**. If it fails, they get watched closely after that. Agents from the outside who try to break in during the solo meditation don't need to roll, though don't tell them that until they're inside the house.

Each Agent can pursue one of these items during the meeting. Agents who move to the farm can pursue the other items later. If they're not careful to arrange diversions for their new housemates, each investigation may require a **Stealth** test to avoid notice or a **Persuade** test to explain it away.

OCCULT TRAPPINGS: An Agent with **Occult** 40%, or who succeeds at a roll, recognizes that the farmhouse is arranged mostly on Feng Shui principles. It looks like it was done years ago, before Estelle, and it hasn't been changed or maintained since. There is no Satanism, no Candomblé, no Santeria, just a few Voudoun implements at the tourist-kitsch level, and a few decent texts on Macumba down in Estelle's basement book boxes. Nothing shocking.

PLANTING BUGS: The Agents can attempt a **Stealth** test to plant a hidden bug or camera; planting just a microphone, which is less obtrusive, grants a +20% bonus. The Handler should make the roll secretly and reveal the results when the time comes.

- **FUMBLE:** Someone finds the mic and now the police are involved.
- **FAILURE:** It's a fifty/fifty chance whether it's Brandon Murphy or Estelle who finds the bug and becomes deeply paranoid. No cops though.
- **SUCCESS:** The Agents can listen in and/or watch what's happening, though it isn't as good as being there.
- **CRITICAL SUCCESS:** In addition to facts, the listeners get insights into Brandon Murphy's personality (see **BRANDON'S DESIGNS** on page 148), giving a +20% bonus to **CHA** or **Persuade** rolls to manipulate him.

ESTELLE'S FINANCES: Estelle's still in a guest room, maintaining the fiction that the Galworthys are coming back. Her financial documents are all in one big accordion folder—a bit messy, but better than you'd expect from someone with ADHD. Examining them takes about a half-hour. That's not an opportunity Agents are likely to get at their first meeting, but if they move in it shouldn't be too difficult. A **Stealth** success is needed to put things back where they were so Estelle doesn't notice. An Agent needs **Accounting** at 40% or a successful roll to get anything useful. There are no signs of gross malfeasance. She's making a middle-class living off speaking fees and sales of Harmonic Bliss texts at New Age events. No Internet presence. Not what you'd expect from a fringe religious leader. She's taking far less money from her cultists than the average scam cult. It's almost as if she's in it for something other than the cash.

ESTELLE'S LIBRARY: The books she's unpacked and put in her bedroom include a lot of middle-brow New Age spirituality stuff as well as music theory at all levels of sophistication. The books with the plates in the front reading "Armstrong Knox" are relatively obscure; lone prophets from the 1970s and '80s. **HUMINT** at 60% or a successful roll notices that *o*nly the most basic and elementary music-theory books have anything highlighted.

THE BATHROOM: Agents who search the bathroom finds a pill bottle full of fine brown dust, not the extended-release methylphenidate hydrochloride tablets for ADHD that the label indicates. If the Agents take a sample to a lab, see **ANALYZING THE SPORES** on page 143. (This is not her only supply—she also keeps several doses in a vial that is always in her pocket.)

THE ATTIC: The attic storage space holds dozens of boxes and old trunks filled with belongings that the Galworthys never got around to throwing away: out-of-date electronics and random wires and parts, tool boxes, moldy encyclopedias, toys that Meredith hasn't seen in over a decade, and so on. There are spare boards and planks, spare roof shingles, and a stack of spare sheets of fiberglass insulation. Beneath the insulation stack, resting on a stout plank of wood, Estelle Knox has hidden the Glyph of Harmony.

The Hidden Glyph

The glyph is carved into a piece of concrete, 5 cm thick and about 30 cm by 45 cm across. It weighs as much as a couple of cinder blocks. It looks like the symbol was gouged out with something sharp and with a lot of force behind it, and that the same kind of scratching was used along its edges. Estelle Knox can move it only with serious effort; she prefers to get help from Brandon Murphy or someone else stronger than her.

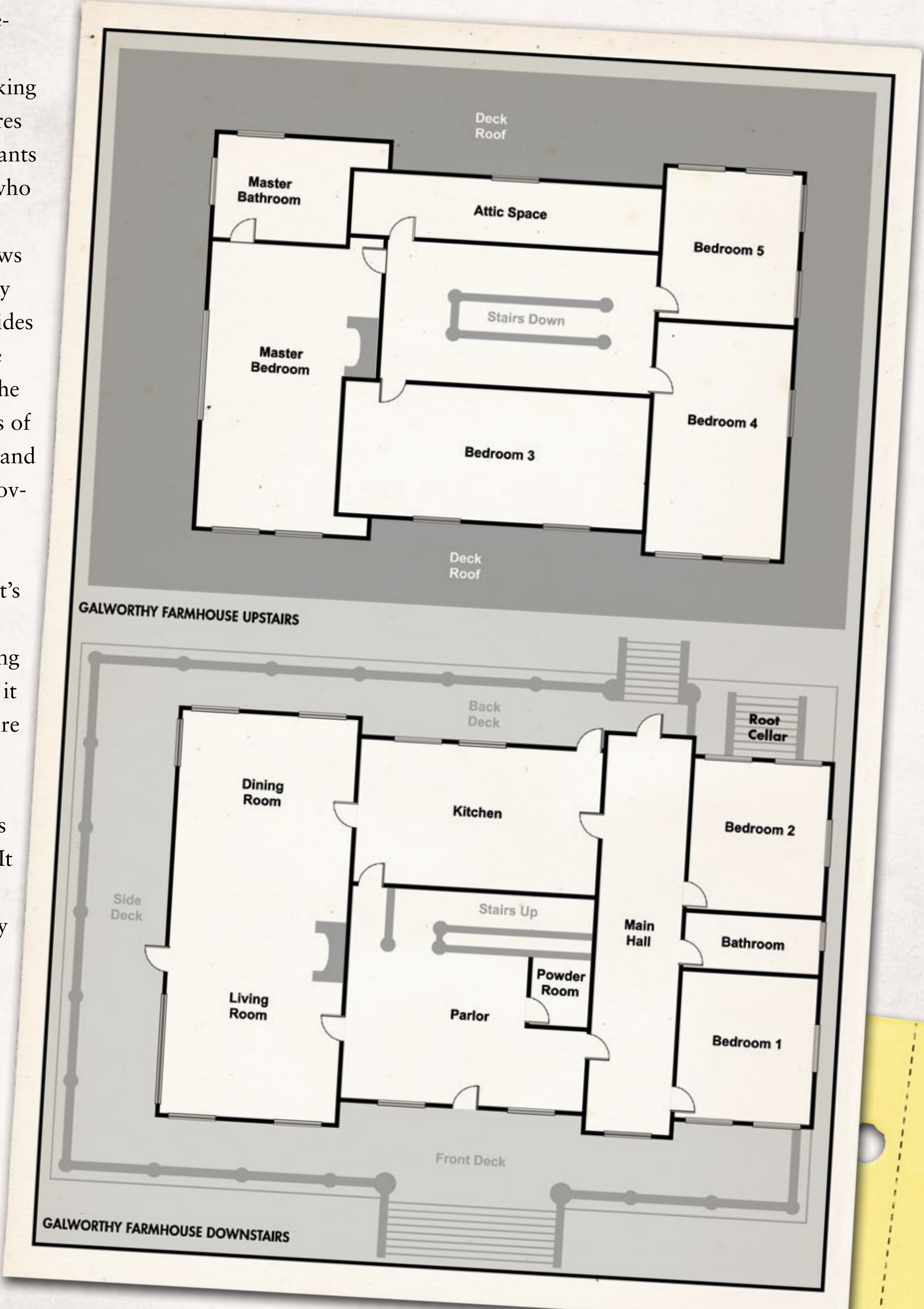
There are no immediate effects from looking at the glyph. It's just a slab with a weird carving. (That's because Kaughrhun Kaal doesn't know anyone's looking at it, so it does not spend the energy required to make it active.) Sneaking it out of the house would require serious cunning.

BREAKING THE GLYPH: Breaking the Glyph of Harmony requires a hammer or crowbar and grants a point of **SAN** to an Agent who does it. As soon as the glyph breaks, Kaughrhun Kaal knows it and sends a spasm of misery and fear through Knox. It guides her towards the last place she left the glyph. If she catches the Agents with the broken pieces of it, she calls the cops on them and that's the end of their undercover operation. See **BLOWN COVER** on page 147.

ASKING ABOUT THE GLYPH: It's not like Knox hid the glyph; it's on her PR materials. Asking her what it means and where it came from doesn't even require a roll. She just smiles knowingly and says, "That is the Symbol of Harmony. It means good things. You'll see soon. It came to me as a gift from the universal song." She won't say more than that.

Analyzing the Spores

If the Agents get a sample of the brown dust from the bathroom bottle and analyze it with **Pharmacy** or **Science (Biology)** 40% or a successful roll, it turns out to be fungal spores of unknown origin. The spores are dry and stale, but are presumably airborne when fresh and fluffy. Each spore is bacteria-sized, about a micron across. They have structures that look like propulsion organs, and they're durable. Even a cheap


Deck Roof
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Attic Space
Bedroom 5
Stairs Down
Master Bedroom
Bedroom 4
Bedroom 3
Deck Roof
GALWORTHY FARMHOUSE UPSTAIRS
Back Deck
Root Cellar
Dining Room
Kitchen
Bedroom 2
Side Deck
Stairs Up
Main Hall
Bathroom
Powder Room
Living Room
Parlor
Bedroom 1
Front Deck
GALWORTHY FARMHOUSE DOWNSTAIRS

commercial painter's mask would block them out, so they certainly can't cross the blood-brain barrier.

The spores are extremely complex. Each has elements that are clearly meant to attach to other spores, forming larger structures and passing RNA-based information between them. Given the density of their DNA, a lot of them together could be more than the sum of their parts, even if they don't metamorphose into specialized forms the way human stem cells can.

If the Agents cultivate the spores in agar to see what happens (what could go wrong?), they form rudimentary sense arrays. They can't reproduce, and there aren't enough of them in the sample to do anything other than listen and watch. Kaughrhun Kaal becomes aware of the Agents, but it's not alarmed; all it knows is that more hairless apes are doing rudimentary science on its spores. That's not a problem.

Should they inject a lab rat with spores, the sense arrays form in its eyes, along with a tiny digesting cyst that seems to be parasitizing the rat's blood to sustain itself. If dissected, the cyst has rudimentary hormone production capacities. It could probably create trace amounts of estrogen, oxytocin and epinephrine.

The short takeaway from all this is that these spores are strange, seem to form sense organs and produce hormones, they can't reproduce, and a mask protects you. For a character with **Science (Biology)** or **Science (Botany)** at 50% or a successful roll, that costs 0/1 **SAN** from the unnatural.

If the Agents turn these samples and their conclusions over to Odette Jackson to be passed up the chain to Delta Green, they get a copy of the **PNAKOTIC ENTITY REPORT** (see page 179) after two or three days.

WITHOUT SCIENCE SKILLS: If the Agents don't have the appropriate science background, Odette Jackson or Francisco Seles can hand them over to a Delta Green Friendly in Omaha named Dr. Vanessa Che at Creighton University. In this case "Friendly" is a bit of a misnomer. Dr. Che covers up her deep unease with the unnatural by being grouchy and disagreeable. She is, however, thorough. She conducts experiments on an agar plate, discerns the rudimentary sense organs forming, and burns the sample. Then she injects it into a rat, sees the same thing along with the hormone cyst, and incinerates the rat. She recommends *extreme* caution with this stuff. "No reason to think it couldn't kill you. Mask up." The more questions they ask her, the more impatient and brusque she gets.

She does not, however, have the connections to get the **PNAKOTIC ENTITY REPORT** (see page 179). Jackson sends her findings upstream for cross-referencing only if the players' Agents think of it.

Sneaking Onto the Farm

Searching the farm without moving in first is not easy. Seven people are currently living there, most of whom are there specifically to be *there*, not just crashing there. Between the initiation of the investigation and the departure of the Blissful to Arcadia Junction, there is literally not one-second when there isn't *someone* in the house. Most of the time, it's at least five people.

Sneaking in is difficult (unless it's during a meeting, as described under **SEARCHING THE HOUSE** on page 141). If the Agents approach by day, they're automatically spotted by some friendly Blissite who comes out to ask if they need help.

If the Agents come at night, each needs a **Stealth** roll to get near without drawing attention. Results are as follows. Remember, Estelle suffers from 'insomnia.'

- » **FUMBLE:** Counts as two regular failures.
- » **FIRST REGULAR FAILURE:** Someone inside saw something and is looking around curiously. The Agent(s) don't know this, however.
- » **SECOND REGULAR FAILURE:** The Agent(s) have been spotted, and are now being filmed on a cell phone by a Blissite who is screaming "Call 911!" at the top of her lungs.
- » **SUCCESS:** Nothing happens.
- » **CRITICAL SUCCESS:** Nothing happens, and the Agent gets to skip their next **Stealth** roll.

If they fail while planting a bug, it's spotted the next day. If they search the bathroom, they automatically find Estelle's spore cache. The only way to search her bedroom without waking her is by rolling a critical success. Tell the player that straight out and see if they feel lucky. Just be ready for Estelle to scream for the cops.

Long-Distance Surveillance

Agents can squat in a ditch with a telephoto lens, or bounce a laser off a farmhouse window from afar and listen in. No rolls or skills are required, but such surveillance does not reveal much. It's a frustrating process of glimpses, half-heard half-conversations, and a lot of humming and drumming. The Agents sense that Knox is excited about something, but she does not talk about it.

After **THE GLYPH MEETING** (see page 149), the dynamic changes. People are now awed, dreamy, enraptured, and happily, deeply committed. That's when the Agents hear the words "Arcadia Junction" and can start the next phase of the investigation.

Bugging Estelle's Phone

Estelle Knox avoids her mobile phone, and uses it only if backed into a corner. She uses a cheap, low-end burner phone and she usually only turns it on when she's going to make a call, or if she thinks she missed a message.

Someone with hands on the phone for thirty minutes or more can hack it without a roll with at least 40% in **SIGINT** or a successful roll. To hack the account remotely requires a **SIGINT** roll at -20%.

- **FUMBLE:** The hacker gets nothing and Estelle is suspicious.
- **FAILURE:** The spy can access her saved messages and change her voice mail greeting.
- **SUCCESS:** As soon as she turns on her phone, the spy can pinpoint her location within half a city block. Out in Arcadia Junction, it's accurate within five miles. All her calls are automatically logged and the hacker can listen in real time or play them back at leisure.
- **CRITICAL SUCCESS:** Same as an ordinary success but it takes half as long.

It's the same if anyone wants to hack the cell phones of other Blissites, who are struggling to isolate themselves from the outside world. Doing so gives the effects of tapping the farm land line, described in the next paragraph, or the location tracking described in the previous one.

Tapping the phone at the Galworthy farm is easier. Anyone with **SIGINT** 25% or more can do it without a roll, and anyone with **Law** 40% or a successful roll can get rubber-stamp permission for wiretapping as part of the FBI cover investigation. But all it gets is a few calls home to reassure parents and friends that everything's fine, better than ever in fact. The Agents hear nothing actionable or even suspicious.

Hunting the Galworthys

The local cops' efforts to find the Galworthys are poor at best. The cops checked their credit cards, airlines, asked their associates but…they *had* been talking about taking a trip, people already regarded them as flaky, and there's no paper trail past a local gas station where they filled up Stacy's car (a 2009 Toyota Avalon, stock green paint job, license plate 931 CTY) and bought potato chips. According to Estelle, she dropped them off at their favorite Kansas City bakery and then drove the car back to the farm. She let the police search the farm and the car and they found no signs of foul play. So the police shrugged and let it go. It's not weird for people to take off on vacation, leaving a house-sitter behind.

Of course, the longer the gap between their departure and any financial activity, the more suspicious it gets. Any Agent who says they're digging into the Galworthy financials can find that no money has been withdrawn or added since they vanished, no bills have been paid, and no charges have been made on their credit cards. Moreover, there were no big withdrawals *before* the trip. If they are on "vacation," it's somewhere they don't have to buy food or pay for lodging.

Moreover, that Kansas City bakery is right across the street from a bank, so the surveillance camera coverage is heavy. The cops never requisitioned the tapes, but FBI agents who are willing to sit through them for a couple hours can easily see that no metallic green Avalon sedan never pulled up, even in the broad span of time Estelle cited.

An Agent who spends a day doing *nothing else* but searching traffic and gas station camera footage in a growing radius around the Galworthy farm can get a partial plate reading ("931 C——") off a green

Avalon on the day in question, one hour after the gas station payout. It was on Interstate 70 heading west, directly *away* from Kansas City. No roll is required for this clue, but the cameras do not spot the car again until after Topeka. Then it apparently gets off the major roads because it doesn't turn up on traffic cameras again.

An Agent who goes to the University of Missouri and asks about Stacy Galworthy in the biology department can learn a lot, as described under the **UMKC LAB** sub-header on page 156. The cops didn't bother asking around there, either.

Asking Delta Green About the Glyph

The first sketchy thing in the whole case is the glyph on the pamphlet. Delta Green has a need-to-know policy of information compartmentalization, but if nothing else is seeming uncanny, the Agents might ask their case officer for more background.

A couple of days later, the case officer arranges a private meeting with the Agent who made the request. The case officer needs to know why the Agent needs to know more about the image from the pamphlet. The Program's intelligence people do not give out this kind of information just to satisfy curiosity. This glyph could be hazardous. Are the Agents willing to expose themselves to unknown risks?

If the Agent says yes, the case officer says to get back to the case. The next day, a courier shows up with the research. See **PNAKOTIC ENTITIES REPORT** on page 179.

Independent Glyph Research

The Agents might investigate the glyph on their own. If they go only by the shape of it, it's an **Occult** roll. If they also know that it's sometimes called "Averturus" they automatically succeed if their **Occult** is 40% or higher.

Success finds a way to contact a "black magick rune expert" vouched for on the darknet's most legitimate diabolism discussion groups. The expert goes by "Dr. Deep," and charges $200 for an email-only consultation. See **DR. DEEP'S ANALYSIS** on page 178.

Backgrounding Blissites

It's not hard for the undercover Agents to get the names of the Harmonic Bliss participants, and neither is it difficult for agents to get their backgrounds. For the most part, no rolls or even minimum skills are needed to get the information listed in the **BLISSITES** box on page 140. Handlers may decide for themselves how reluctant individuals on the list are to open up about themselves to undercover agents, but none of them have any great secrets. They're sad, not mysterious.

"Overwatch"

Someone might want to set up a hidden observation post and watch the house through a scoped rifle, the better to take headshots if things go wrong.

Nothing is likely to turn kinetic at the Galworthy farm unless the Agents instigate it, but the players have no way of knowing this. If anyone takes this tack, describe the night, give them a good view of the house, make sure they know where everyone is at all times. At the second meeting, they can see where Estelle gets the Glyph of Harmony.

If anyone bugged the house, make sure the watcher can hear and see anyone who's talking about the newcomers. Have Estelle and Debbie chirpily gossip. If they Agents have aroused suspicion, have Brandon discuss that with Estelle.

"The Guy in the Chair"

Someone in the van might listen to an undercover agent's body mic and talk to them through an earpiece, offering advice, looking up information when they can't, and generally providing a backstop to their efforts.

Make sure everyone stays as paranoid as possible about the wire getting discovered. If you like, you can give a temporary +20% boost to skills like **Occult** if the guy in the chair is offering valuable services like looking up mystic orthodoxy to make it seem like the undercover agent is really knowledgable. On the other hand, if *too* much is being said, you could give the agent on the inside a penalty, or force a **Persuade** roll to keep cool despite the distraction.

Possible Escalations

For the most part, Agents are likely to keep their cool, maintain their cover and not get caught. But unexpected moves are the hallmark of tabletop roleplaying, so here are some contingencies your Agents might provoke, with advice on how to handle them.

Blown Cover

In the unlikely event that the agents blow their cover—most likely by getting caught wearing a wire or planting a bug—Estelle has an immediate, negative physical reaction: creepy, uncontrolled rhythmic movements.

She shouts at the Agents that they're sand in the gears of the universe, and that they'd better show more respect to the harmonies or they'll be silenced. Even she can't explain what she means by that.

Unless the Agents come up with a really good story to convince her that they're not cops or documentary film makers, and back it up with a **Persuade** roll at a –20% penalty, she throws them out. If they don't go peacefully, her first call is to the county sheriff's office and her second is a TV news show. ("Government agents without a warrant entered my home under false pretenses and won't leave!")

From that point on, play it by ear. The sheriff and district attorney aren't going to press charges against federal agents who were invited to attend a meeting at a suspected kidnapper's house. The media may or may not dogpile, depending on what might be more fun.

If Knox somehow accepts the Agents' explanation, she's still upset about the electronics. She lets the Agents return, but insists they leave for now and remains suspicious and keen-eyed when they're around. Living at the farm is now out of the question.

Abducting Estelle

The team may just charge in, throw a hood over Knox and take her to an undisclosed location. The drawback is that there are a lot of witnesses at the farm, and some still have cell phones, not to mention the land line. They call the police and record everything.

INTERROGATING KNOX: If the Agents get Knox away and interrogate her, she immediately cracks. She sobs and says that the Glyph of Harmony caused all the trouble. She says Stacy Galworthy found it—she doesn't know where—and it influenced everyone. She offers to give the Agents the Glyph of Harmony if they just let her go. The glyph is back at the Galworthy farm. She says it is hidden; it has strange properties that make it impossible for most people to find; but she will take them. She says the Galworthys are all at a new home, an old abandoned house on the other side of the state. If they demand an address and directions, she says she does not know the exact address but can take them if they let her go. If they demand directions instead, she directs them to the ruin that houses Kaughrhun Kaal. She says nothing about the Old One there.

Getting a read on Knox is very difficult at this stage. She is under the influence of a Great Old One. An interviewer with **HUMINT** 50% or higher, or who succeeds at a roll, senses that Knox does not think she is lying. An interviewer who both has **HUMINT** 50% or better *and* succeeds at a roll thinks she may not know the difference between fantasy and the truth.

LETTING KNOX REVEAL THE GLYPH: If they go back to the farm with Knox to get the glyph, and they see the glyph while in her presence, she immediately commands, "Please put your weapons down." For the glyph's effects, see **THE GLYPH OF HARMONY** on page 150.

From there, play it by ear. Remember that refusing a reasonable request costs Willpower. Hearing "Oh God, please put the gun away!" from eight or nine Blissites over and over wears down even a stalwart Agent pretty fast. If an Agent panics and opens fire, see **EVERYBODY ON THE FLOOR!** on page 153.

The trance of obedience wears off before the local sheriff's deputies start asking questions. It does not, however, wear off before those officers direct the Agents and everyone else to lie down with their fingers enlaced on the backs of their heads. Once the cuffs are on and the Agents are disarmed, the officers ask Knox what the hell happened. Her first action is to show them the glyph. Her second is to offer them some spores to eat; see **INGESTING THE SPORES** on page 151 and **SPORES + GLYPH = SYNERGIES** on page 152. From there, work out the outcome on your own.

Don Gets Squirrelly

The day after the first meeting, Don Hocking tells one of the Agents that he wants to talk to Special Agent Jackson. They can talk him into working with them instead if they muster convincing arguments or a **Persuade** test.

Hocking wants to renegotiate his deal. He's worried, he can't sleep, he doesn't think he can do this. He doesn't have a well-considered position, but he will request one of the following.

TO BE WITHDRAWN: He didn't know covering for the undercover Agents would be so hard. Now that they're in, can't he withdraw instead of risking a mistake?

IMMUNITY FROM PROSECUTION: He's *never* been clear about any crimes he might have committed, and he's not going to start now. (Hocking's personal interpretation of Harmonic Bliss involves 'shrooms, a fact he neglected to mention to Estelle or anyone else.) But he pushes for blanket immunity from criminal charges.

THE WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM: Arguments that Harmonic Bliss is unlikely to pursue bloody vengeance like the Mob don't work. Hocking is afraid and can't even explain what scares him.

Those last two are more problematic for the Agents than Hocking thinks, of course. The only prosecution they're likely to muster is a cover story, and Hocking probably sees too much of the truth to be part of that. Pulling Hocking out is a bad idea, too, if for no other reason than keeping him involved gives the Agents control over him.

Assuming the Agents turn Hocking down, they can take a soft line ("You're doing great. We're going to remember you when we wrap this up, which is gonna be soon!") or a hard one ("If you want more protection, you have to tell us more.") and can buffer it with a **Persuade** test, but the repercussions come down to your judgement. After this scene, is Don going to feel more reliant on his friends in the government? Or is he going to feel more isolated and more inclined to look to his own interests first?

Life at the Farm

The next Harmonic Bliss meeting is a few days after the first. Whether they move in before that meeting or after, living on the property gives Agents greater latitude to look around; see **SEARCHING THE HOUSE**, page 141.

Estelle's Inspiration

Estelle Knox is hyperactive and distracted. She can't sit still, and paces constantly from room to room, rarely speaking to anyone but humming to herself. She's increasingly excited about something, but she won't say a thing about it.

Keep your eyes open for a chance to have a private conversation between Knox and one (or both) of the undercover agents. Just play Estelle honestly, as a woman who truly believes she's got a line on something that can improve the lives of countless people.

After this conversation, say to the players, "Does your character like Estelle? Simple yes or no."

Players who say "no" have no particular effects. Players who say their Agents like Estelle get a +20% bonus on **Persuade** with her. But if they see her die, or choose Kaughrhun Kaal over them, it costs 1 **SAN** from helplessness.

The Guests

The other residents are drifters, self-made mendicants, true believers, and at least one ironic hipster. (They're listed in the box labeled **THE BLISSITES** on page 140. If you're wondering, Vivica Poseidon is the hipster.) One of the guests, Brenda Keening, is really light sensitive, so most of the shades are drawn during the day. Most of them are like Debbie Amstutz, natural followers who thrive on Knox's friendly leadership. There are four of them plus Knox, the Agents, Amstutz, and Brandon Murphy.

Brandon's Designs

With Estelle Knox distracted after the first meeting, Brandon Murphy steps in as leader.

Murphy sees Harmonic Bliss as a buffet of gullible, emotionally weak people. He needs a steady diet of folks like that to meet his sexual and financial needs. He moved into the farmhouse a little over two months ago and opened up his savings to Estelle Knox for the advancement of Harmonic Bliss. Not his entire savings, of course, just one account that he could do without. Enough to fool Estelle.

And he is fooling Estelle thoroughly, giving her the sense of control and superiority that she craves while setting himself up as her aide. He sees a time, maybe in a few months, when he supplants Knox as the charismatic leader of Harmonic Bliss.

He knows nothing about Estelle Knox's experience at Arcadia Junction.

Murphy has developed a keen eye for the personality types who respond well to Harmonic Bliss: needy, insecure, uncertain, brittle. An Agent who seems interested in Harmonic Bliss but acts confident, resilient, and in control—an Agent who has a high **POW** score and does not hide it, in other words—rouses his instincts. So does any Agent who immediately gets on Knox's good side.

He's unlikely to think they're cops unless he sees badges or guns or overhears something. Instead, he suspects they're grifters like him. He does not challenge them immediately. Instead he watches for ways to put them at odds with Knox.

Meanwhile, Murphy's instincts for emotional vulnerability have drawn him to Debbie Amstutz, and she's not sure how to react to his ambiguous attentions. He's grooming her to be emotionally dependent on him, but she doesn't see it. Yet.

The Glyph Meeting

At the second meeting, Estelle Knox gets the help of Brandon Murphy or another Blissite (or Agent) with higher **STR** than herself to carry the Glyph of Harmony downstairs. It's a heavy slab wrapped carefully in blankets. She puts it on a table in the dining room, still wrapped.

Knox looks different. One's tempted to say "radiant," in the way that brides look flushed as they walk down the aisle. In Knox's case, the Kaughrhun Kaal spores are filling her with the brain chemicals that tell you you're loved, justified, and successful.

She greets everyone effusively and says that she has something special to show them before body instrumentation. A chorea convulses her briefly, but she turns it into a gesture at the draped object in the dining room.

Then she makes her announcement:

"Greetings my friends, my fellows, my beloved biolins! We've gathered as a chorus to sing along with the universe. And believe me when I tell you it's listening. We had no grand ambitions to crusade. We won't kill and convert by the sword. Our goal was to work with the world, with other people, not against them. All of you, everyone here tonight…you wanted to stop arguing with your families. To end conflicts with co-workers. To have marriages free of strife and disruption. We were humble, and we listened.

"Oh my people, we have been given so much more. For simply listening, we have been told something that goes far beyond ourselves. The universe heard OUR song, and it has sung back. We have been blessed with the Symbol of Harmony!"

Revealing the Glyph

With a slightly spasmodic flourish, Estelle pulls the cloth off the Glyph of Harmony.

At this point, ask what the undercover Agents are doing. Their responses are likely to fall into one of three categories.

LOOK AT IT: If they gaze on the glyph, like the other Blissites, they are automatically targeted by the Glyph of Harmony ritual. (See **THE GLYPH OF HARMONY**, on page 150.) They can see that the object is a plate of concrete with a design scratched into it by some heavy, sharp implement. It's the same one from the brochure, and it's fascinating. They want to stare at it.

LOOK DIRECTLY AWAY FROM IT: This is *not subtle*. It's clear to everyone that they're flinching or covering their eyes. That immediately makes Estelle suspicious. Any goodwill accrued so far disappears. If she was already in doubt, she firmly and righteously demands that the Agent leave. "If you're unwilling to harmonize with this beautiful event, then I cast you into the silence!"

CASUALLY AVOID LOOKING: Any Agent who defocuses their eyes or glances edgewise without *obviously* avoiding the glyph must make a **POW×5** test. If it succeeds, the Agent hasn't seen the glyph and keeps the avoidance concealed. If the roll fails, the Agent is affected by the ritual.

The Glyph of Harmony

No human being can cast the Glyph of Harmony ritual, only Kaughrhun Kaal or an entity like it. After casting it, Kaughrhun Kaal can spend a unit of its MTBE (see **KAUGHRHUN KAAL** on page 170) to activate the glyph whenever it knows someone is looking at it. For every unit of MTBE spent, it can affect up to five people.

There is no limit to how far the glyph can be from its maker, but it requires awareness of the targets. Having someone infected with spores nearby is the most common method. If there are more people present than the MTBE expenditure covers, the closest are affected first. It can only influence people who are looking at it.

Anyone influenced by the glyph is put into a semi-conscious trance state for an hour. They can still take actions according to their own volition, but they become *extremely* suggestible. This has two effects.

- First, the subject counts as being adapted to both violence and helplessness. It all seems like a dream.
- Second, if anyone tells them to do something, it is likely they will do it. Any halfway reasonable suggestion—"Put the gun down," "Let me see your phone," "Take off your clothes"—gets carried out unless the target spends a Willpower point. Such commands cannot change long-held beliefs, reprogram memories or do anything other than initiate behavior. Commands like "Trust me," "Forget the last half hour," or "Stop loving your husband" are ignored. But "Tell me why you joined Harmonic Bliss" requires either paying the Willpower or saying something like, "I'm an undercover federal agent and we think you kidnapped the Galworthys."

Communion

After everyone has been affected by the glyph, Knox pulls a silver container out of her pocket. It's the size of a matchbox and full of Kaughrhun Kaal spores. (She filled it from the cache in the bathroom.)

"This is communion with the higher song, distilled into physical form," she says. She carefully sniffs some with a tiny spoon. "Everyone, join the harmony!"

The Blissful all looked at the glyph and fell under its sway. Being in a suggestible state, they form an orderly line and snort spores. Again, the Agents in the room have a decision to make.

REFUSE THE SPORES: As described in **THE GLYPH OF HARMONY**, above, an affected Agent must spend a Willpower point to resist cooperating. Not getting in line makes them stand out and earns them Knox's mistrust, unless the Agent succeeds at a **Stealth** test to pretend to ingest. If they give a good reason for not taking the spores, a **Persuade** roll can keep Knox from judging them harshly. If at least one Agent refuses the spoon, Don Hocking does as well. Estelle doesn't like this, and chastises them unless someone suggests otherwise.

INGEST THE SPORES AFTER AVOIDING THE GLYPH: The Agent develops Kaughrhun Kaal infection, as described in **INGESTING THE SPORES** on page 151.

INGEST THE SPORES AFTER SEEING THE GLYPH: The Agent develops a Kaughrhun Kaal infection and becomes servile towards the monster, as described in **SPORES + GLYPH = SYNERGIES** on page 152.

Questions

Everyone is still semi self-willed, in a dreamy stoned sort of way, so Agents may well use this to their advantage. Some Q&A possibilities follow. But even if interrogated, Estelle can't stay focused for long. She wants, at this point, to have the best body instrumentation session ever, and unless the Agents kick against it, her will is done.

What is that powder?

"It is a sacred nectar, from the body of a higher being that came to Earth to harmonize us all."

Where did you get it?

"It came off the body of Kaughrhun Kaal, the dragon stone, to which I was led because of my attunement to the song."

What's that symbol carved on the stone?

"I don't know, but it's so beautiful, isn't it? I call it the Glyph of Harmony. It's like music made visible."

Where did the Glyph of Harmony come from?

"Another gift of Kaughrhun Kaal, so that we can forever be of one soul."

Where is Kaughrhun Kaal?

"Yes, we should all go there! That's an excellent idea. A pilgrimage to Arcadia Junction! We can set off tomorrow!"

Where are the Galworthys?

"They await us in Arcadia Junction."

Ingesting the Spores

During the first 24 hours after ingestion, the targets sinuses and throat become sore. That is because the spores latch on to tissue and rendezvous with each other until they can form a proto-organ capable of burrowing through the tissue. They work their way into the lungs and lymph system and drift through the bloodstream until they can reach the eyes and fat deposits.

Within an hour, spores linking up in fat deposits become miniature drug factories that can dump their products directly into the bloodstream. These can produce bursts of euphoria, anxiety, somnolence, erotic frisson, severe pain and just about any other reaction governed by hormones and blood chemistry. Kaughrhun Kaal can make the target suddenly feel good or sad. It can make a well-rested target exhausted. Remaining awake when Kaughrhun Kaal commands sleep requires the expenditure of a Willpower Point to keep stumbling along for another hour. Sourceless terror or inappropriate feelings cost 0/1 or up to 0/1D6 **SAN** from the unnatural.

It takes about a full day for the spores to migrate to the eyes and form sensory arrays. These allow Kaughrhun Kaal to see and hear anything that happens to the infected person. Those sensory-blobs can see even if the host is blind and hear even if the host is deaf.

Spotting the sensory arrays takes a close physical examination by someone with **Medicine** 40% or **Science (Biology)** 50%, or a successful roll of either.

If its servants displease it, Kaughrhun Kaal can poison them. Every hour, it can drop a dose of toxin into their bodies from within. The victim gets a **CON×5** test when the venom hits their bloodstream. If that succeeds, it has no effects beyond cramps and a runny nose. If the **CON** test fails, the poison does a point of damage.

Curing the Spore Infection

Those little proto-organs in the adipose tissue can be spotted in an X-ray or MRI scan by anyone with **Medicine** 50% or **Science (Biology)** 70%, or a successful roll of either. Once spotted, it takes about 24 hours and several long pokes with sharp needles to figure out that they dump many mood-altering chemicals into the bloodstream.

The sensory arrays can be seen by anyone with **Medicine** 30% using the equipment available in any ophthalmologist's or otolaryngologist's office. Spotting it with a typical magnifying glass requires **Medicine** 40%+. A successful roll spots it in either case.

Typical medicines for a fungal infection—micafungin, itraconazole, amphotericin B complexed with sodium deoxycholate, the usual suspects—work perfectly on Kaughrhun Kaal infection. A successful **Medicine** roll kills it all off. An ordinary failure means either the mood factories *or* the sensory apparatus are removed, but the other remains. A fumble means the fungus stays.

Kaughrhun Kaal does not take tampering with its remote colonies lightly. The *second* time anyone on Earth gets treated for its fungus, it produces a storm of symptoms—fever, terrible joint pain, panic attacks, vomit, and excessive sweating. These are sufficient to give a –20% penalty to anyone foolish enough to roll anything while grievously ill. These symptoms last 1D4+2 days. Keeping up treatment after that, though, the same **Medicine** results apply: It is curable.

If more than a dozen people get treated for Kaughrhun Kaal fungus, it escalates its attacks. The same **Medicine** results clear the infection after 1D6+2 days, but in addition to all those symptoms, it adds a wicked cough, a rash, and ongoing immune system damage. The victim permanently loses a point of CON even after being cured.

The spores can't reproduce within the human body. And once they're dead, they're gone. Their only source is Kaughrhun Kaal itself. But don't tell the players that.

Spores + Glyph = Synergies

If someone ingests spores *and* comes under the power of the Glyph of Harmony, Kaughrhun Kaal imposes *ongoing influence*. (This is what it has over Estelle Knox.) This has a number of effects.

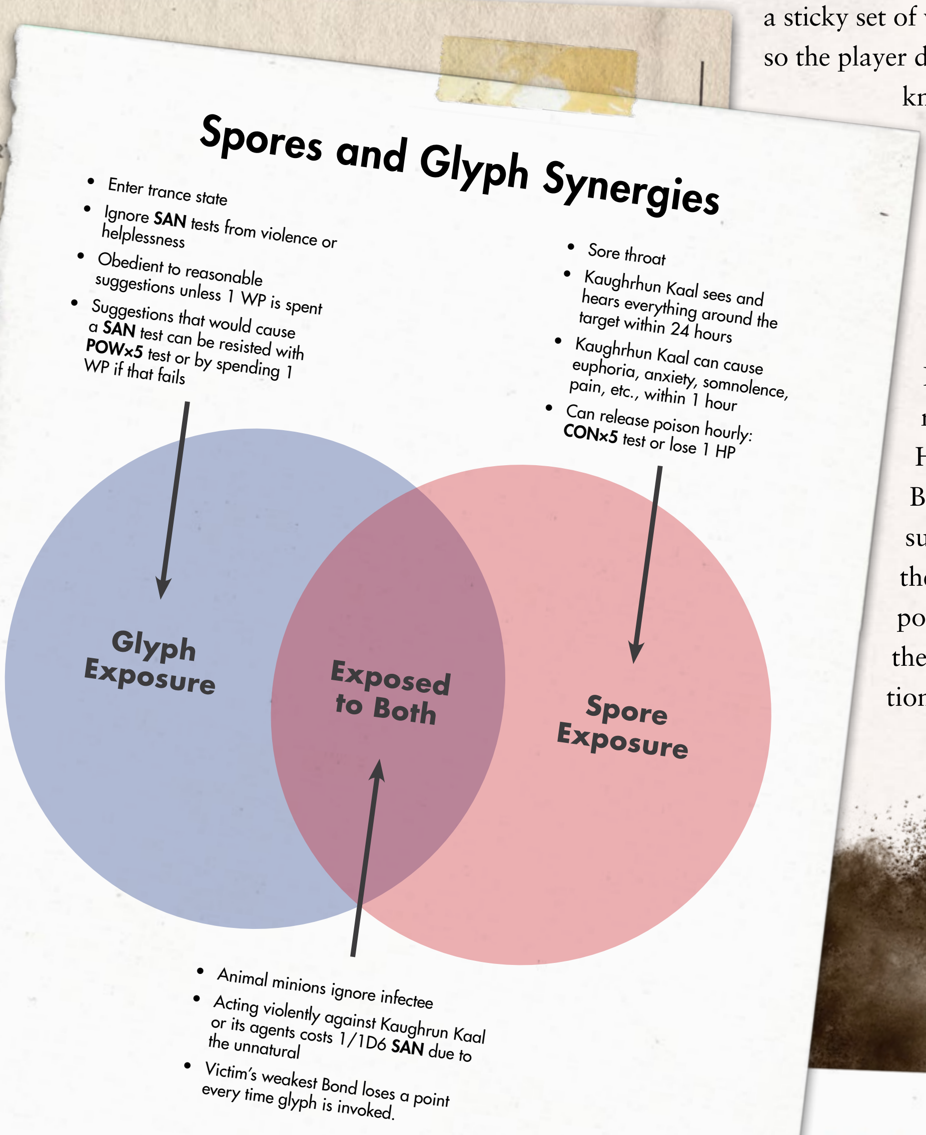
First, it reduces the victim's weakest Bond by one point. Next to the new force of bliss, what mortal allure could compare?

Second, Kaughrhun Kaal's animal minions (see **VISITING ARCADIA JUNCTION** on page 157) ignore the target. They know their own.

Third, acting violently against Kaughrhun Kaal or any of its agents costs 1/1D6 **SAN** from the unnatural. (Make sure your players know their Agents now have a sticky set of weird feelings about such an action, so the player doesn't commit to an action the Agent knows would feel wrong enough to possibly cause insanity.)

Don Tells All

Unless he's not there or the Agents prevent it, Don Hocking both sees the glyph and ingests the spores. From that point on, he poses a sharp risk to the undercover operation. He won't reveal them on his own. But if Knox or Brandon Murphy is suspicious and asks Hocking about the Agents while he's under the glyph's power, he tells the truth. That ends the undercover phase of the investigation immediately.



Spores and Glyph Synergies

- Enter trance state
- Ignore **SAN** tests from violence or helplessness
- Obedient to reasonable suggestions unless 1 WP is spent
- Suggestions that would cause a **SAN** test can be resisted with **POW×5** test or by spending 1 WP if that fails

- Sore throat
- Kaughrhun Kaal sees and hears everything around the target within 24 hours
- Kaughrhun Kaal can cause euphoria, anxiety, somnolence, pain, etc., within 1 hour
- Can release poison hourly: **CON×5** test or lose 1 HP

- Animal minions ignore infectee
- Acting violently against Kaughrun Kaal or its agents costs 1/1D6 **SAN** due to the unnatural
- Victim's weakest Bond loses a point every time glyph is invoked.

The Second Announcement

The Glyph of Harmony effect wears off while the Blissful are still humming to themselves.

When they gather to discuss their personal issues, Estelle pauses to make another announcement:

"Friends…fellow singers in the spirit…you all felt the incredible openness of Kaughrhun Kaal tonight. It was revealed to me and I joyously share it with you. We are at the forefront of a new era of tranquility for all humankind. We shall sing with this ageless wisdom from now on, at every meeting!"

As she talks about "singing with ageless wisdom," anyone who tasted the spores feels a jolt of ecstasy that's almost orgasmic. Agents who did not ingest the spores see the shudder run around the room.

Knox schedules the next meeting for two days later, and says that everyone should now stay at the farm. The Blissful all wholeheartedly agree. Agents who want to leave incur Knox's suspicion, no matter the reason. (The farm has a full freezer, so there's no reason to get food; and Knox puts no faith in prescription medicines, so there's no need to retrieve those.)

At this point, there are several tactics the Agents may try.

ASK ABOUT THE SOURCE: If they want Knox to tell them where the glyph came from, or where she got that stuff in the bottle, it's now a **Persuade** roll. But that roll's only permitted if she trusts them. If they visibly flinched away from the glyph or refused to taste her sacred dust, no success is enough to get her to say the words "Arcadia Junction."

ASK ABOUT THE GALWORTHYS: If this is done without finesse, it alarms Knox. It's up to the Handler to evaluate how smooth the Agents are. Blunt or clever, the answer's the same and requires no roll: Estelle says the Galworthys "moved on to a greater state of harmony, just as my father did. They're waiting for us. We will find them when we find harmony." A **HUMINT** roll reveals that she has a *flicker* of doubt as she says this, but she quickly covers it over. If the Agents choose to press her further, see **ABDUCTING ESTELLE** on page 147.

BREAK THE GLYPH: With a successful **Stealth** roll, one of the undercover Agents can watch Knox put the Glyph at the bottom of a cedar chest in her bedroom. Or, if she's distracted, a **Search** roll in her room finds it. Breaking it requires a heavy hammer or crowbar. That grants a point of **SAN** to the Agent who breaks the thing.

As soon as the Glyph breaks, Kaughrhun Kaal knows. It sends a spasm of misery and fear through everyone who's spore infested. They feel a reduction of the unhappiness if they turn or move towards the staircase. (Remember, it takes 24 hours for Kaughrhun Kaal to remotely see through the eyes of infectees, but it can see whatever Knox sees, and it can affect moods an hour after spore infection.) Depending on how much time passes before the Agents act, and whether they are infected, it may know *they* did it and begin punishing them. Otherwise, Knox immediately stops whatever she's doing and is guided towards the broken Glyph. See **BLOWN COVER** on page 147, or **"EVERYBODY ON THE FLOOR!"**, below, if things get kinetic.

INTERROGATE THE OTHER BLISSITES: This doesn't require a roll. Debbie Amstutz, Brandon Murphy and the rest of them know nothing, and this is the first time they ever saw that rock. They are extremely pleased and excited, however, and speculate wildly about what it all means.

Responding to the Glyph Meeting

Agents who didn't go undercover may not understand the full import of the Glyph Meeting. From outside, it just sounds like they saw something and maybe sniffed drugs. Agents who were present may or may not be more antsy to act. Add these options to those under **INVESTIGATIONS** on page 141.

"Everybody On the Floor!"

Agents may see the glyph and overreact. They may decide to draw guns and start arresting people, or they may stage a raid immediately afterward. Tell the players that Agents trained in law enforcement know it is way out of line unless they have evidence of a serious crime.

If they know not to look at the glyph, the raid is one-sided. A few of the Blissful run, but most scream and submit. It could turn into a giant lawsuit against the FBI, depending on how carefully they put the frame on, but if they smash the thing without looking on it, they're in pretty good shape.

The bad part is, Knox tells them nothing and, given how much serenity Kaughrhun Kaal can squeeze into her blood at any time, she feels pretty terrific about staying quiet no matter what happens.

IF THEY ARREST EVERYONE, SMASH THE GLYPH AND CONFISCATE THE SPORES, events become complicated. No crime has been committed and Knox becomes paranoid. Everyone from the farmhouse raid is out of the county jail in a week or less, and Knox takes three of them to Arcadia Junction under the cover of darkness. The Agents may follow them and confront the final threat in a variant of **GOING WITH ESTELLE** from page 160.

IF THEY ARREST EVERYONE AND FRAME THEM, that calls for a **Law** test (to know what kind of evidence to plant) and a **Stealth** test (to plant drugs or other evidence). If one of those fails, the effort arouses suspicion and the Agent with the worst **Persuade** skill may need to make a **Persuade** test to keep their stories straight. It could unravel their careers if they fall under suspicion of being corrupt. All depends on how good the frame is and how firmly they plant it.

If the Agents take time to interview Knox repeatedly, they could get her to open up about Kaughrhun Kaal and Arcadia Junction. That requires two interviews attempting to establish rapport, with successful **Persuade** rolls, and a third interview and **Persuade** roll where the interviewer pretends fascination with Knox's deepest discoveries.

If Knox goes to prison, she certainly tells some of the other women in the penitentiary about the treasure hidden in Arcadia Junction, hoping to get them to go there. And she's had many chances to tell her followers about it, before and after the Agents arrived. At least one of her converts goes to Arcadia Junction and gets Kaughrhun Kaal moving.

IF THEY MASSACRE EVERYONE, the damnable thing is, *this solution works*. The Galworthy farm is in the middle of nowhere and has its own backhoe. No one is around to hear screams and gunshots. If Agents kill everybody, and either bury them in quicklime or stage it as a mass suicide, they have no way to find the Galworthys but they stymie Kaughrhun Kaal for some time. Estelle's spore reservoir is neutralized, the glyph is down, and its one human infectee is murdered.

To get away with it, the Agents must kill *everyone*. Knox and most of her followers just run, and nearly a dozen people running in different directions may be more than the team can handle, especially if they make it to their vehicles. One or more might hide, call 911, and bring in the local deputies, making a bad situation worse.

See the **TRADECRAFT** chapter of the *Agent's Handbook* for guidelines on disposing of bodies and cleaning a crime scene; see the **SANITY** chapter for the psychological toll of mass murder. Give Knox a dying speech to drive home that there is a deeper threat not yet found: "Kaughrhun Kaal…I go to Kaughrhun Kaal…Kaughrhun Kaal…will awaken in blood." If the Agents investigate her history more deeply, perhaps with the aid of Don Hocking, they could find hints pointing to Arcadia Junction.

Stealing the Glyph

If someone wants to sneak in and steal or wreck the glyph, the effects are closer to what happens when an undercover agent crushes it, as described on page 143 under **BREAKING THE GLYPH**.

Remaining Hidden

Teams that had no one undercover and that surveil the Galworthy farm from afar eventually hear that the Blissful are planning to go to Arcadia Junction. Even the laziest of teams can simply follow the Blissful there when they pack into a series of cars and minivans and set out.

Researching Arcadia Junction

A quick Internet search tells the Agents the essentials. See **EPA POLLUTION REPORT** on page 175.

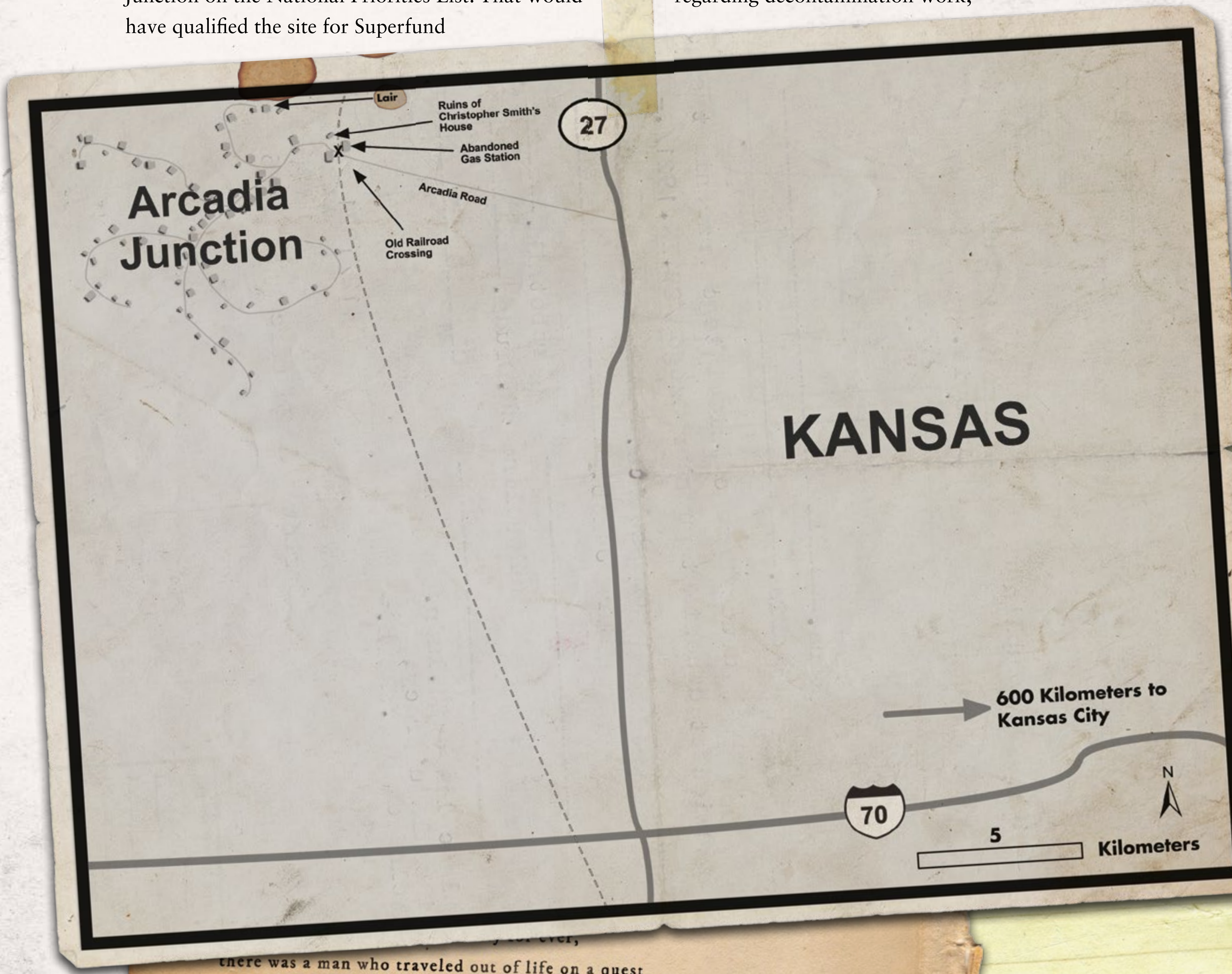
If the Agents go on a fishing expedition to the library or one of the universities around Kansas City, here's what they can find with successful rolls.

THE CLEANUP: Agents curious about the failure to clean up Arcadia Junction after all this time can find pertinent details with an hour's research and **INT** 13, or with **Bureaucracy** 40% (or a successful **Bureaucracy** roll) and a few phone calls to EPA and state officials.

On 16 November 1999, the EPA began discussions with the state of Kansas about placing Arcadia Junction on the National Priorities List. That would have qualified the site for Superfund remediation, which would have allowed the EPA to begin the long, expensive work of pumping and treating the contaminated aquifer. Kansas declined.

The *Kansas City Star's* website has an archived article from November 19, 1999: "Two officials in the Kansas Statehouse, who asked to remain anonymous, said that the state government was unwilling to risk the economic consequences of having a town listed as a public disaster by the EPA."

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) assumed responsibility for the remediation. KDHE sought state funding for the expensive aquifer cleanup, but Arcadia Junction was placed low on the state's list of funding priorities. KDHE took steps toward litigation against Plains Union Railways regarding decontamination work,



for ever,
there was a man who traveled out of life on a quest
into the spaces whither the world's dreams had fled."

but dropped those efforts after public complaints by state lawmakers. Cleanup funding never came.

TCE AND MTBE: An Agent with **Medicine** 60%, **Science (Biology)** 60%, or **Science (Chemistry)** 60%, or a successful roll of any of those, and who spends hours paging through abstracts, can learn a mind-boggling amount about TCE and MTBE. For the rest of the operation, any attempts to recognize symptoms, follow chemical clues, or spot something weird involving these chemicals succeeds.

In 1999, MTBE was used in low concentrations as an antiknock agent in U.S. gasoline. It has since been phased out in the U.S. due to groundwater contamination, though it still is used in Asia. MTBE sees some use as an industrial solvent. TCE is a widely-used industrial solvent and degreaser. It was used as an anesthetic before it was determined to be carcinogenic.

PUBLISHED RESEARCH: An Agent with **Science (Biology)** 60% or **Science (Botany)** 40%, or a successful roll of either, and who spends hours reviewing the publications on Arcadia Junction, finds Stacy Galworthy's name. Four years ago, she was one of several grad students from the University of Missouri–Kansas City's School of Biological Sciences who collected samples from the site.

THE UMKC LAB: An Agent can get access to the School of Biological Sciences labs by just walking in during business hours. An Agent with **Bureaucracy** 60%, **Science (Biology)** 50%, or **Science (Botany)** 30%, or a successful roll of any of those, can get a grad student's help to log into their network. If they come in asking about Arcadia Junction, they get Stacy Galworthy's work notes from four years ago.

Galworthy was conducting research under a grant from the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism to study the long-term environmental impact of TCE contamination of soil and groundwater. She took a few dozen samples from Arcadia Junction.

Galworthy analyzed the samples at a UMKC lab the next day. Her analysis showed routine results consistent with past analyses from the site. Protocols would require the destruction of the samples, but apparently Galworthy failed to comply. Several samples are still in storage.

An Agent who has any relevant **Science** skill at 30% or rolls it successfully notices a peculiar aside. One of the samples, which Galworthy labeled as an immature *Volvariella bombycina,* burst while she was examining it. There are no details about the incident. *Volvariella bombycina* is nontoxic.

If an Agent asks to review the specimens Galworthy collected, a grad student can find photos of them on an archived CD-ROM in a professor's office. If the Agent has **Science (Botany)** 50% or **Science (Biology)** 70%, or makes a successful roll of either, they can tell that the *Volvariella bombycina* was labeled incorrectly. (If not, have the professor notice it, shaking her head.) The Agent cannot recognize the sample's true taxonomy, and neither does anyone else in the bio department. They say they just can't tell from that photo.

Most faculty and students at the biology lab remember Stacy Galworthy. She was kind of old for the program, not the best or brightest student, sloppy in the lab, forgetful, cavalier about safety precautions…all, unfortunately, traits that match up with the picture her neighbors and pre-Bliss friends paint of a sweet but absent-minded nature lover. No one was surprised when she quit working at the lab and abandoned her doctorate. None were aware that she and her family vanished.

If the Agents come to UMKC *before* they know about Arcadia Junction and ask about Stacy Galworthy instead of the town, you can play out a conversation with her thesis advisor, Dr. Glenda Aquista, who casually mentions that Stacy left a cataloguing project half-done. She doesn't remember the name "Arcadia Junction," but she is willing to dig through the lab freezer and pull out an old sample labeled *Volvariella bombycina.*

If asked about it, she examines it, frowns, and says "Well, looks like Stacy botched that identification. I…am not sure what this is." If they want to take it, she reluctantly hands it over, muttering that it really should have been destroyed. If they want her to look at it, she can be the one who figures out just how weird the spores are. Essentially, this is another way to get the core clue about the spores even without stealing them from the Galworthy farm.

Researching Christopher Smith

An Agent with **History** 50% or **HUMINT** 50%, or who rolls either successfully, can find a reference to a Chris Smith from Arcadia Junction in a sociology report about white supremacist conspiracy theories. Apparently, for about two months after the 1999 train crash, some White Aryan Resistance group believed that Smith was a Soviet sleeper agent mistakenly activated.

If you have no plans for extending the origin of Kaughrhun Kaal backwards, this red herring is as far as it goes. Smith lived near the gas station to which he devoted his adult career. He didn't get in trouble. He parked his truck on the train tracks.

If you want to have Smith be the heir of cultists, or of brave defenders against Pnakotic entities, you can provide your carefully tailored clues as the Agents start poking into his background. ("Why did a gas station attendant travel to Thiruvananthapuram for two months in 1994? What is this 'Carnacki Foundation' that paid for his trip?") Those can lead to an extended campaign. (See **ONGOING INVESTIGATIONS** on page 164.)

Visiting Arcadia Junction

Arcadia Junction is about 600 km miles west of the Galworthy farm, a drive of six or seven hours. If the Agents have enough time, they can get there and make some observations, even if they don't want to overlap with Estelle and her crew.

A GHOST TOWN: Arcadia Junction is on the high plains. Trees grow thickly along the creek, but otherwise there's nothing but flat fields. In its heyday the town had a handful of shops and businesses and over 100 homes. All are abandoned. It's so remote, not even squatters come through. A few buildings around the railroad junction are still blackened from the fire, including the gas station and Christopher Smith's house.

DIGITALLY DISMAL: There's cell coverage, but calls get dropped with annoying frequency. You can access data but it is very slow.

THE SMITH HOUSE: An Agent with **Archeology** 50%, **Forensics** 50% or **Science** (**Geology**) 50%, or who successfully rolls any of those, needs only 30 minutes at the ruins of Christopher Smith's house to find the *old* site where Kaughrhun Kaal was hiding.

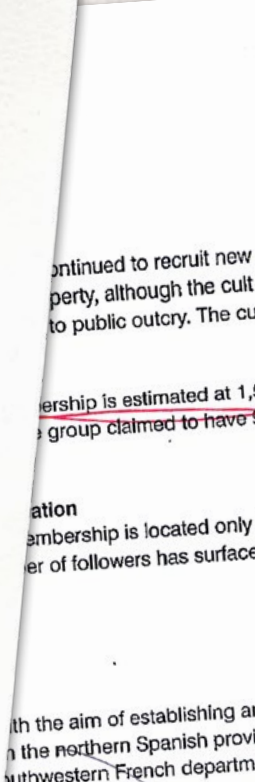
Flying West

If this is the first time the Agents have heard of Arcadia Junction, they would have to requisition an FBI or DEA aircraft to get there more than an hour or so before the cultists.

The FBI office in Kansas City has a McDonnell Douglas 530 Little Bird helicopter. Odette Jackson can requisition it with a **Bureaucracy** test, or another Agent who's in the FBI can make the attempt. The Little Bird can carry a pilot, a copilot, and three passengers. It has a range of 420 km, so it would need to refuel at a civilian airfield at least once between Kansas City and Arcadia Junction (there are plenty of those). It has a cruising speed of about 250 km per hour. An FBI special agent (not part of Delta Green) is its assigned pilot. The pilot is available in 1D4 hours. The Agents can have the bird signed over to an Agent in the FBI as pilot by making another **Bureaucracy** test.

The DEA office in Kansas City has a Cessna 206H single-engine airplane hangared at the Kansas City International Airport. It can carry a pilot and five passengers. It has a range of 1,340 km, so it can make it to Arcadia Junction without refueling. It has a cruising speed of 260 km per hour. An Agent in the DEA can requisition its use with a **Bureaucracy** test. An Agent in another federal law enforcement agency (such as the FBI) can make the attempt at –20%, having the plane and pilot placed with the team on a temporary duty assignment. A DEA special agent (not part of Delta Green) is the plane's assigned pilot. The DEA doesn't sign it over to anyone else. The pilot is available in 1D4 hours.

Or, plan B, it wouldn't be hard for undercover agents to sabotage one of the cultists' vehicles during a rest stop, or fake a health emergency. An Agent who's local to the area, and who has **Bureaucracy** at 50% or better or who makes a successful roll, could find a sympathetic State Trooper to pull over one of the Harmonic Bliss vehicles for some minor infraction and just…process…their…driver's…license…really…slowly…to put them a half hour or more behind schedule.



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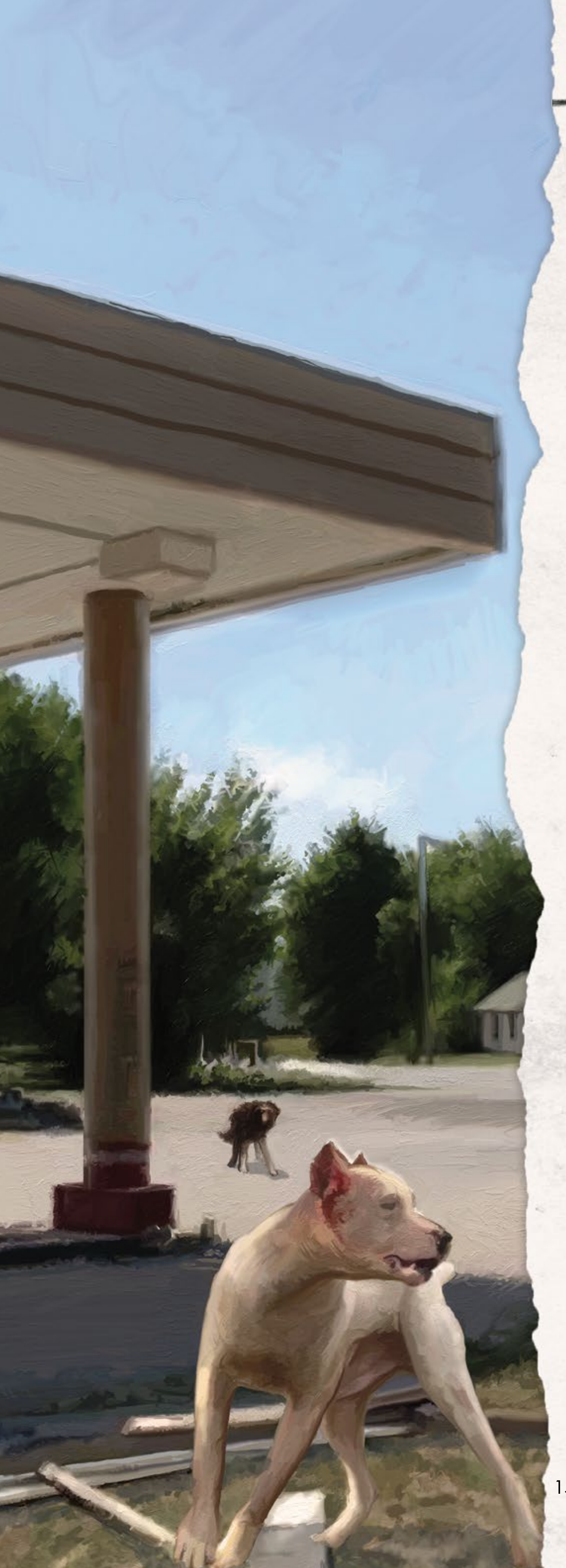


Clearly something heavy moved around in the basement, judging by the cracks in the concrete floor and the damage to the staircase. The treads are broken upward, like something heavy and hard was dragged up them. Part of the concrete in the basement was crudely broken by extremely heavy blows from something very hard—not quite a piledriver, but close. Those heavy blows were at the corners. After that, something sharper was used to poke along a margin to create a break, then pry it from beneath to remove a slab about twelve by twenty-four inches.

If the searchers succeed with an **Archeology** or **Forensics** test, they find a trace of old human bone in a corner. If they send it off to the lab, it takes a week for it to get identified as a portion of a jaw belonging to James Galworthy.

WILDLIFE: Walking around the town for an hour, a character with **Survival** 50% or who rolls it successfully has insights into wildlife. There are almost no birds. The signs of vermin-induced decay are mild, too. There are dog prints here and there, as you'd expect, but they're strange. Orderly. What you'd expect from trained dogs in a circus, not strays roaming an abandoned town. If that character's **Survival** is 70% or better, they deduce that, going by tracks and scat, a *lot* of wildlife here is behaving more like herds than individuated species.

Anyone watching for several hours notices that the animals in Arcadia Junction act strangely. They seem uncannily shy and cunning, and don't vocalize. Agents who split up to look around may catch sight of a group of dogs moving in unison, *not barking*, and turning to flee from them at exactly the same time. (This is five or six **POSSESSED FERAL DOGS**, described on page 169.)

INFECTED ANIMALS: An Agent with **Medicine** 60% or **Science** (**Biology**) 50%, or who rolls either successfully, can capture a few local critters for blood work or autopsy. The investigation requires about a full day catching the animal, and a full day spent in the lab, cutting and sampling, and a few days for results to come back. The Agent finds mild MTBE and TCE contamination. But there are fascinating infections in animals' bloodstreams and particularly in the eyes. It's an unclassified fungal structure, big particulate spores with phalanges for self-directed movements, forming themselves into articulated structures. It's too big to fit through even a basic filter mask.

SOIL AND WATER: An Agent with **Science** (**Biology**) or **Science** (**Botany**) 60%, or who rolls either successfully, finds some sort of fungus that grows into tissue pods about the size of a golf ball. Judging from the animal tracks…dogs eat them? If they send samples away for analysis, they get the same results they would from capturing infected animals.

FINDING THE NEW LAIR: Are you really ready to unveil Kaughrhun Kaal? Or have the Agents have been on the ball and gotten to Arcadia Junction days ahead of Estelle Knox? Then a successful **Search** roll can find the entrance to its domain, another house where a stinking mound of rotting, bled-out foxes and voles indicates that Kaughrhun Kaal has used its Galworthy-fueled mobility to get more blood. See **GOING IN ALONE** on page 164. If you don't feel it's quite time for the final unveiling, it's perfectly fine to decide that they just don't find it yet.

Et In Arcadia Ego

The next two days on the Galworthy farm are spent making supplies, doing laundry, arranging to have someone tend the goats and chickens, and packing. Estelle Knox says they're going to take a trip and she's revealing the destination soon.

The Galworthys have a cargo trailer in a barn. Knox asks Brandon Murphy to hook it up to James Galworthy's pickup truck.

The next Harmonic Bliss session, two days later, opens with another dose from the Glyph of Harmony. (Remember that Agents with spores face Bond erosion unless they look away.) While everyone is docile and happy, Estelle Knox makes an announcement: She has found a resonant idol of incalculable age. It has unlocked higher levels of consciousness within her, putting her in contact with the next degree of cosmic awareness! She's leaving, right now, for Arcadia Junction.

If Agents expresses reservations about taking a long drive with people high on spores, Knox and the others gently and pityingly chide them. (None of the Blissful say anything negative. They don't know that Arcadia Junction is a toxic ghost town.) Knox makes it clear that she doesn't expect anyone to do anything they're uncomfortable with… though refusing a chance to experience soul-mating on a higher quantum level doesn't speak very well about one's sincerity, now does it?

If an undercover Agent mentions that Arcadia Junction is drenched in carcinogenic trichlorethylene, Knox's response depends on how you've chosen to play her.

If you've played her as "religion cheerleader," she's puppyish in her enthusiasm, presenting this adventure as all win and no downside. She assures them that the problem's overstated and that the fake news about it being poisoned is probably a synchronic event designed to keep the fearful and unenlightened from messing with the statue.

If instead she's been more darkly mysterious, she suggests the "disinformation" is probably the work of a government conspiracy that wants to keep people in the dark, blinded to the true interconnectedness of all things. "They win when they divide and conquer," she intones. "But unity with the Great Whole is our strength!"

Either way, she points to herself as evidence that either the pollution there is drastically less dangerous than those old EPA sourpusses would have you believe. Or it means her claims about illnesses just being a symptom of disharmony are correct and she didn't get sick because of her enlightenment. "Believe and you too will be protected!"

If the Agents don't do anything to prevent it, eleven Harmonic Bliss cultists agree to ride out, with varying degrees of trepidation and excitement. (Brandon Murphy and Debbie Amstutz go, unless events have forced either of them out. Don Hocking doesn't want to go, unless he's under the influence of the glyph and spores, but feels trapped by his commitments to the Agents.)

If Agents raise objections, no cultist says anything right away, but the four who were commuting to meetings quietly slip away and go home while everyone else goes with Knox.

Agents not with the cultists can tail them to Arcadia Junction. This does not require a roll. Estelle and the others are too distracted to notice or care.

Only the Worthy?

The Agents may try to dissuade Estelle from taking all of her most gung-ho followers to Arcadia Junction, but that's a nonstarter. Kaughrhun Kaal makes her feel wonderful whenever she tells someone about Arcadia Junction. She feels that going on this pilgrimage is a sacred blessing, and she doesn't want to leave anyone out. Harmonic Bliss is all about sharing!

They may have better luck with individual adherents. Again, though, most of them have been spored and get a delicious frisson of pleasure when they hear the magic words "Arcadia Junction." Agents can attempt **Persuade** rolls, but they're at –20% on account of not operating dedicated drug factories in the bodies of the people they're talking to.

Kaughrhun Kaal Unveiled

Unless outside Agents found Kaughrhun Kaal earlier, nothing much happens in Arcadia Junction until Estelle Knox and the Blissful arrive.

The Harmonic Bliss visitors glimpse a pack of feral dogs on the edge of town, watching; see **POSSESSED FERAL DOGS** on page 169. This spurs both Don Hocking and Brandon Murphy get their guns from their cars and hide them upon their persons.

Estelle, ignoring the dogs, gives a short speech about the magnificence of piercing the eggshell of a merely humanocentric life. She says it's time to emerge into the nest that is Earth and learn to fly and to sing with our cosmic neighbors.

The Agents have two options. One is to give Estelle her lead, following her until she reveals this "Temple of Bliss." The other is to interfere before she gets there, either under the pretense of enforcing the EPA quarantine, or more seriously by arresting everyone for trespassing.

Going With Estelle

If they follow Estelle, she leads them to a house that's not merely abandoned, it's ruined. The roof has collapsed, dragging the walls in at tipsy angles. The door is wedged shut. But two sides of the house came apart at their joint, so it's possible to clamber inside. The siding tilts and its rusted, sharp edges scrape at everyone who enters. Each must make a **DEX** test. On a failure, the Agent loses one hit point and better get a tetanus shot for that nasty cut. Make sure you mention that a few of the Blissites got hurt going in and are complaining about it. (Later, if you need to get things moving, one of them touches the idol with blood and starts the craziness.)

Inside, it's a jumble of crumbled, rotting, moldy drywall and tumbled two-by-fours, some scattered and some splintered. It looks like it could collapse with the slightest shift of weight.

Estelle confidently ducks down and, on hands and knees, leads her followers deeper into the ruin. Pulling aside an awkward slab of siding reveals a meter-square section where the wooden sub-floor has been smashed and torn out, and the concrete slab beneath as well.

That reveals a circular hole made of packed dirt, sloping down at a very sharp angle. With a grin, she beckons and slides down first. It's a deep, dusty, unreliable slope. Climbing out again takes two turns, or only one with a successful **Athletics** test.

The Lair of the Old One

The slope leads to a cave, crudely gouged and compacted out of the soil. The space is three meters tall and roughly 12 meters in diameter, with the underside of the house slab as a ceiling. Its walls are rough and uneven.

In the middle, at the lowest point, a few three-meter-long, rigid but twisted and ropily segmented grey limbs extend from the earth in which the monster is buried. Each limb is topped by a motile and wholly dextrous blood-red pad, from which a brown crystalline spike can protrude. Arranged around them like a nest are the desiccated bodies of numerous small mammals.

Meredith Galworthy hangs at the end of one limb, not breathing, withered as if she had starved to death. But when visitors arrive, her eyes open, gleaming with unnatural energies. She regards Knox and the other visitors with alien, inscrutable hunger. Seeing Galworthy costs 1/1D4 **SAN** from the unnatural.

Knox gazes at Galworthy and the stony entity in rapt adoration.

If the Agents allow her the time, Knox explains that Kaughrhun Kaal is no mere statue. It is alive. Chemicals spilled in the soil around Arcadia Junction somehow woke it. She heard its voice in her mind and it told her its name. She asks, "Isn't it magnificent?"

Knox says that Meredith Galworthy and her parents joined with Kaughrhun Kaal, but it had a special purpose for Meredith's ascension. She has become one with a god. It has kept her physical form alive and her blood has helped it remain awake.

The other limbs slowly stretch toward the visitors.

Knox flings her arms around one of the stony limbs and starts gouging spores out of the grooves and striations of its surface and cramming them into her mouth. Kaughrhun Kaal, at this point, uses its "flood with ecstasy" power on her, described on page 170 under **KAUGHRHUN KAAL**.

Hungry for Blood

Knox's goal, and that of everyone who takes spores from the thing, is to provide it enough fresh blood to become mobile. Then it discards the remains of Meredith Galworthy and grinds its way outside and onto the cargo trailer of the Galworthys' truck, so its pawns can help it find even more sustenance.

If a small amount of blood spills on Kaughrhun Kaal, it gains enough mobility to take an action in the following turn. If a larger amount of blood spills on it, or if it hits someone with its spike, it can maintain its mobility for 1D4+1 turns. See **KAUGHRHUN KAAL** on page 170.

Kaughrhun Kaal sits at the low point of the enclosure. If enough fresh blood is spilled, eventually some trickles down to it, as long as the soil doesn't soak it up first. If in doubt, allow the Agents a **Luck** roll to avoid blood reaching the hungry monster.

As soon as blood is shed in the cave, Kaughrhun Kaal summons the **CARPET OF VERMIN** (page 169) and its pack of **POSSESSED FERAL DOGS** (page 169). They beeline towards the cave. Unless Agents outside the house somehow stop them, they enter the cave, attack anyone who is not infected with spores, and convey blood to Kaughrhun Kaal until it becomes motile. If everyone inside is infected, they attack whomever is closest.

Gunplay in the Lair

The crowded basement necessitates some special firearms rules.

If an Agent rolls a hit while aiming in the direction of the exit, nothing happens but damage.

If an Agent rolls a hit while aiming away from the exit, he or she must make a **Luck** roll. If it fails, blood splashes Kaughrhun Kaal.

If any firearms attack by or attacking an Agent misses, no matter which direction it was aiming, the Agent must make a **Luck** roll. If it fails, a cultist is hit by accident. Unless incapacitated outright or restrained, the injured cultist stumbles over to Estelle and bleeds on the statue in the next turn.

If Don Hocking and Brandon Murphy exchange fire with each other, they don't accidentally activate Kaughrhun Kaal.

Options

At this point, the Agents have choices to make.

Kill Meredith

An Agent can kill Meredith Galworthy with a successful attack roll of any kind. There is very little blood. She slumps and slides off the monster's limb. Kaughrhun Kaal goes rigid until more blood is spilled.

Restrain Estelle

Trying to talk her out of an act of communion with a higher cosmic being is doomed. The only way to stop her from directly ingesting another dose of spores is to pin her down with **Unarmed Combat**. Knox struggles and the cultists (at this point all infected, except possibly for Don Hocking) take her side.

Badges and Guns

If the Agents pull out badges and call for backup, that provokes a variety of reactions. About half the cultists freeze, shocked into stillness. The other half panic and flee. None are more aggressive in this than Brandon Murphy. He pulls his gun, curses, and tries to drive as many panicking people as he can into the space between him and the Agents. If not stopped, he pistol-whips Elizabeth Mitchell, sending a thin spray of blood onto Kaughrhun Kaal or its blood-carrying vermin. Agents who grapple him get met with bullets. If Murphy opens fire, Don Hocking (if present) shoots back in panic. See **GUNPLAY IN THE LAIR** on page 161.

(If the Agents spotted the men's weapons and disarmed them, some other cultist does something stupid—tripping while trying to flee or punching one of the Agents—to escalate the conflict and put blood into the situation.)

Wait And Watch

If the Agents let Estelle embrace the statue, she immediately begins to writhe and coo in visible delight. Don Hocking, if he's there, gives the them a panicky look and says, "Aren't you going to do anything?!"

A few of the bolder cultists step forward and start harvesting spores from the idol's crevices and crannies. One does it per turn, with Brandon Murphy shoving forward to be the third in line.

If the Agents do nothing, after Murphy and four others get their spore-doses, Hocking panics. "This isn't what the founder wanted! *Get away from it!*" No one does. He pulls his gun and keeps screaming. If no Agents disarm him, he opens fire on the statue, on Knox, and on Murphy. (Don never liked Brandon.) The resulting bloodshed may awaken Kaughrhun Kaal; see **GUNPLAY IN THE LAIR** on page 161.

If Hocking isn't present, and the Agents don't prevent it, some cultists decide not to embrace the statue. Estelle, Murphy, and four others do. Cut away from the basement and play out what's happening with the Agents up top. The blanket of vermin and the dog pack close in on the house, summoned to savage anyone not infected by spores. If the up-top Agents stop the infected animals, they can go into the basement just as the cultists start biting themselves to offer blood to their new god. It's up to tactics and **Unarmed Combat** rolls to stop them quickly enough to keep Kaughrhun Kaal sedated, or perhaps to make sure it only gets enough blood to move for a few turns while the Agents drag off the survivors.

Estelle's Autopsy

An autopsy of Estelle Knox finds a mild hyperthyroidal condition and extraordinarily, inexplicably high levels of GABA and oxytocin. There are also fascinating infections in her bloodstream, particularly in her eyes and ears. It's an unclassified fungal structure, big particulate spores with phalanges for self-directed movements, forming themselves into articulated structures. It's too big to fit through even a basic filter mask, which prevents accidental inhalation if the analyst is wearing one.

Eat Some Spores

If any Agent chooses to eat spores, gently take away the character sheet, look the player in the eyes, and say, "You've never been so happy." Then cut to the rest of the Agents up top and have the **CARPET OF VERMIN** and the **POSSESSED FERAL DOGS** (page 169) close in just as Kaughrhun Kaal bursts from the earth, gore-streaked and triumphant. Estelle and the now-insane Agent stumble along behind it, dazed in the presence of their living god. Play out the combat to see if (1) Kaughrhun Kaal kills everyone but its slaves, (2) it leaves some alive while its servants motor it away or (3) the Agents figure out a way to stop it. Do they have heavy weapons? If not, they're probably out of luck.

Do Everything Right

To take control of the basement safely, the Agents must:

- Prevent Knox from getting a mouthful of Kaughrhun Kaal.
- Either take Murphy down without bloodshed or let him go before anyone gets shot.

If the Agents prevent bloodshed, they can eventually escort everyone out, take them into custody, seize the statue, and find the bodies of the Galworthys underneath.

Stopping Estelle Early

Stopping Estelle Knox before she gets to the "temple" is a fine idea, though not as simple as it might appear. Kaughrhun Kaal knows she's coming and it wants her there. But the first issue is whether the Agents stop her without blowing their cover—assuming they even care at this point.

HARD TAKEDOWN: If the team just sweeps in, guns drawn and screaming "Show me your hands!" most of the cultists submit. Brandon Murphy and Estelle Knox try to run, which necessitates **Athletics** successes to keep up or, failing that, a successful **Survival** roll for each to track them. If they catch Murphy, he surrenders (having ditched his gun and GHB salts along the way). Otherwise, he gets to the highway and disappears.

Clearly, catching Knox is more important.

If the Agents fail to catch Knox, she enters the temple, followed by the pack of **FERAL DOGS** (page 169). They help her bleed out on Kaughrhun Kaal. If that happens, the beast emerges and attacks.

If the Agents grab Knox and put her with the others, Kaughrhun Kaal sends the **CARPET OF VERMIN** (page 169) to try and free her, followed by the dogs.

If the Agents can overcome the dogs and the vermin, and keep Knox away from the temple, they can capture the "statue" without it ever moving. That's a win.

If Knox gets to the temple but the Agents get *all* the other cultists away, her blood renders Kaughrhun Kaal awake, aware, and mobile for hours. But without a vehicle or a human to move it, it's stuck creeping along at about six miles per hour. The next settlement of any size is 40 km away. That's a four-hour crawl. If the Agents have heavy weapons, they can attempt to destroy it. If not, see **THE KAUGHRHUN KAAL CAMPAIGN** on page 165.

THE SOFT APPROACH: Instead of guns and badges, the Agents could approach with biohazard suits, warning the Blissful that it's a quarantine site and they need to turn back. Estelle Knox smiles, plays dumb, and leads her people out of town. Soon she stops and placidly informs them that they're waiting until nightfall and trying again, while assuring them that there's no *real* pollution. Once it's fully dark, she leads them in on foot, spread out, led by the uncanny help of the feral dog pack. At this point, it's up to undercover Agents to choose between following her to the temple (see **WAIT AND WATCH** on page 162) or attempting a hard takedown (page 163). These run the same, except it's now the dead of night.

Going In Alone

Agents who heard about Arcadia Junction early, or who found ways to delay Estelle's road trip, might get there first and search until they find the lair. Kaughrhun Kaal is paralyzed when they arrive, but hardly surprised. It has watched them through the eyes of its verminous slaves. It blasts Agents with spores, so if they're not masked they probably inhale some. It summons both the dog pack and the carpet of vermin (see page 169) to attack and make humans bleed for its benefit.

Unless you feel your Agents need a tougher challenge, Kaughrhun Kaal has been thrifty with its precious energy and has not inscribed a second Glyph of Harmony.

Sanity

Assuming they got it at least partially right, the Agents are probably in line for some Sanity rewards.

If an undercover Agent liked Estelle, and she got out without being killed or riding into the sunset with Kaughrhun Kaal, the Agent gets 1 SAN. Doesn't matter if Estelle hates the lot of 'em.

If no more than two Harmonic Bliss cultists were killed or enslaved, every Agent gets 1 SAN. Raise this to 2 SAN if *all* the Blissful were saved.

If the Agents buried Kaughrhun Kaal somewhere inaccessible, like deep under tons of steel and concrete in the heart of a toxic waste site, each Agent gets 2 SAN.

If the Agents handed a dormant Kaughrhun Kaal over to their Delta Green superiors, they get no SAN reward, but the next time they get called in against a Pnakotic entity, they may (at the Handler's discretion) be equipped with technology designed specifically to impede its movements.

Ongoing Investigations

Some loose ends can lead to later games and other operations.

Christopher Smith

On somber reflection, it *does* seem rather providential that a mind-influencing "idol" with a hunger for human blood would wind up in a tiny community miles and miles from anything, doesn't it? If Kaughrhun Kaal had tasted MTBE in downtown Los Angeles, how long would its joy-spores have taken to find someone willing to smear it with crimson nourishment? Less than a decade, that's for sure.

So how did Smith wind up with this thing? Was it handed down through his family? Did he join an esoteric order (possible allies or enemies) before settling down to tend a gas station? Or did he just buy the thing at a flea market?

When, where and how he got it are all answers that could interest intrepid investigators, but they're really just prelude to the big question: Are more of them out there?

SENECA WHIRLWIND

Some handouts the Agents might get refer to a previous FBI operation, SENECA WHIRLWIND. It was conducted in Littlefield, Massachusetts, in 1998 by FBI special agents Abelard Ramses and Morgan Neill.

The operation was convened after a farmer named William Cordwainer, near Littlefield, complained to local animal control authorities. His livestock was being abused and drained of blood. At the time, the FBI's search for a kidnapped young man named Hector Rios was focused on the area, and Neill's instincts told him that two weird things happening in one small town was too big a coincidence. After Cordwainer wound up in the hospital with bleeding lesions on his back, deliriously screaming about a "vampire tree," Ramses and Neil checked out his farm.

They found that Cordwainer had unearthed something resembling a petrified tree, that became thirstily animate when exposed to mammal blood. Fleeing in shock, they managed to dig up an occult expert named Dr. Moses Fiske, and enlist the aid of army lieutenant Jeff Palmer. After fire, bullets and a light antitank rocket failed to do more than injure it, they lured it to a stony crevasse and buried it by dynamiting the ridge and sending tons of shale cascading down on it. That delayed it long enough for it to return to hibernation, after which they paved over the land and declared it "good enough."

That was when MAJESTIC got wind of things. They disappeared Cordwainer, forged his signature on backdated papers that accepted the FBI's offer to purchase 218 Rural Route H as a training facility. (In fact, the farm was condemned and bulldozed, more weight was piled on top of the burial site, and the whole area was ultimately declared unfit for human habitation through a fraudulent EPA review.) Ramses and Neill both wound up dead, while Fiske was hauled off to Project OUTLOOK, a MAJESTIC brainwashing facility. The only conspirator who avoided notice was Lt. Jeff Palmer, who has sat on the mystery for the last couple decades.

After the split of Delta Green in 2001 following the MAJESTIC war, a number of OUTLOOK "clients" were released, including Dr. Moses Fiske. Researchers attached to the reinvigorated Delta Green program debriefed him, going so far as to retrieve a sample of "stone" that had been blasted off the Littlefield entity and warehoused by MAJESTIC's Blue Team. Fiske's insights, along with those researchers', contributed to the "Pnakotic Entities" report.

Though the documents available to the Investigators are heavily redacted, they do contain relevant dates (mid-July in 1998) and the implication that SENECA WHIRLWIND happened near Boston. The agents in Boston from that time are a matter of record. Even the newspapers ran a couple of brief articles about "unusual animal attacks" in Littlefield, on William Cordwainer's farm.

It doesn't take much for Agents to find out that Cordwainer "mysteriously vanished" after his hospitalization, or that there are still urban legends about the Cordwainer vampire tree.

The report redacts the name Fiske, but due to sloppy finding-and-replacing it leaves the misspelled "Fisker." Quick research turns up not a Moses Fisker but occult-oriented academic Moses Fiske. They can find Fiske in a retirement home, 64 years old, diagnosed with senile dementia and paranoid schizophrenia even though he's perfectly lucid. He provides details if the Agents convince him they're trying to destroy the Pnakotic entities.

If the agents want to dig through seventy tons of plate steel and cement, they could even wake the thing up themselves.

The Kaughrhun Kaal Campaign

It's possible that things go savagely pear-shaped and the agents wind up releasing a lesser godlike entity in Arcadia Junction. Depending on how much violence is happening, Kaughrhun Kaal could gather enough nourishment to stay mobile for days.

If Kaughrhun Kaal gets onto a cargo truck or trailer with a sufficiently-malleable pawn to drive it, job one is finding blood. One trip to a low-security meat-processing plant gives the pawn and the godling a chance to get immersed before the police are even notified. But even advance warning is only more likely to result in dead cops and massive media coverage.

In short, if the Agents fail to stop it and survive, they're not done. They're just facing an inhuman entity that's awake, aware and at its full capacities. Instead of an adventure in which they bury Kaughrhun Kaal and keep it dormant, they face a campaign in which they have to isolate it, starve it out, or overcome it with mere human weapons.

The Old One at Large

Kaughrhun Kaal requires fresh blood to move. Once active, it's likely to retain mobility with frequent, smaller feedings, rather than singular feasts.That said, Kaughrhun Kaal is going to leave a trail of damage until it runs out of energy and is stuck in place. So one way to find it would be to follow the trail of bloodless cattle and transients, possibly running into false alarms like vampires, *el chupacabra,* or nosferatu-themed serial killers.

Kaughrhun Kaal also needs MTBE to remain alert and psychically potent. If it leaves Arcadia Junction, it needs a new source. These days, MTBE is rarely found in gasoline, and Kaughrhun Kaal does not know how to tell human pawns to look for it. Perhaps a former Agent who learned too much and then was made a pawn could help it find MTBE.

Or perhaps it could get lucky and enslave someone who has the skills to study the chemicals that soaked Arcadia Junction. Agents who make the connection between the spilled methyl *tert*-butyl ether in Arcadia Junction's groundwater and the creature lurking in its basements may be able to track Kaughrhun Kaal through crimes involving that chemical, or may at least draw the connection once something bashes through the wall of a chemical plant and cracks open the MTBE tank…without leaving a single drop of it behind at the scene.

As long as it has access to blood and MTBE, Kaughrhun Kaal pursues its agenda items, in any order you wish.

- Find others of its kind, either to work with or to destroy while they're weak.
- Establish reliable, long-term supplies of blood and methyl *tert*-butyl ether.
- Remain hidden.
- Construct a temple and recruit followers.
- Create more Glyphs of Harmony to leave anywhere it might return, and send anywhere it might eventually go.

Luckily for humankind, it has no interest in reproduction (unless you want to go nuts in that direction).

Depending on how well (or poorly) the Agents interfere with its plans, Kaughrhun Kaal could be blown to pieces, forced into dormancy, or even manipulated into a conflict with some other entity of equal or greater power. Or if the Agents consistently come up short in their conflicts, you could end the Kaughrhun Kaal conflict by letting it construct an elaborate and mysterious glyph and teleport away.

Characters

Characters are listed in likeliest order of appearance.

Special Agent Odette Jackson, FBI

A no-nonsense black woman who usually wears her hair in tight braids on the job, or in a loose natural off duty. She dresses in pantsuits and does not have a single smile line on her face.

Jackson has been in law enforcement all her life, with a Kansas sheriff's deputy (and former Army helicopter pilot) for a father. Jackson is not a brilliant investigator, but she has 22 years on the job. She's dogged, consistent, and she knows the importance of always securing a prosecution to keep the Bureau's bean-counters happy. Delta Green got to her early, back when it was nothing but an illegal conspiracy of rogue agents trying to save the world. Her experiences were deeply traumatic, and she never talks about them. But she came aboard when the program was made official in the early 2000s. Since then she's been part of half a dozen operations, running things from the ground in the last two of them. This is her third time working with Francisco Seles. He has earned her implicit trust. The players' Agents have not.

Jackson knows that Seles is prone to disconnecting from himself under severe stress, and tries to keep him away from situations likely to cost SAN.

Jackson comes equipped with a gray Chevy Suburban, with tinted windows and an off-road suspension. It has 32 HP and 3 points of Armor.

Agent Jackson

Team leader, age 49

STR 11 **CON** 12 **DEX** 12 **INT** 11 **POW** 13 **CHA** 13

HP 12 **SAN** 51 **BREAKING POINT** 39

BONDS: Father 13, FBI colleagues 10, Francisco Seles (Delta Green) 8.

DISORDER: Sleep disorder.

SKILLS: Accounting 60%, Alertness 50%, Bureaucracy 60%, Criminology 70%, Drive 50%, Firearms 50%, Forensics 50%, HUMINT 60%, Law 70%, Persuade 50%, Pilot (Helicopter) 50%, Search 70%, Unarmed Combat 60%, Unnatural 6%.

ATTACKS: Unarmed 60%, damage 1D4–1.

Unlicensed .38 revolver with no serial number 50%, damage 1D8.

FBI-issue 9mm pistol 50%, damage 1D10.

FBI-issue Mossberg shotgun 70%, damage 2D10.

Francisco Seles

A thin Latino man with a prominent nose and a mole over his left eyebrow. His work uniform is poorly-fitted suits with a brightly patterned tie (usually loosened) and a matching pocket square.

As an NSA intelligence analyst working for Delta Green, Seles reviews potentially suspicious communications from all over the world for relevance to the Program. Two months ago, Seles was going through cult literature that flows through his office in an attempt to keep eyes on extremist groups in the U.S. He spotted something disquieting in an otherwise-innocuous pamphlet—a symbol he'd seen before during a Delta Green operation. (The details of that op are up to you.) He pulled the pamphlet and sent it to his controllers, who confirmed that the glyph, while of unknown meaning and provenance, was indeed unnatural.

That led to a detached assignment with Odette Jackson's FBI team. Seles did not welcome the news that he was being sent into the field to follow up on his discovery, but at least it's under Jackson. He's worked with her twice before, once in the field and once at a remove as a consultant, and they trust each other. Working under the cover of a civilian FBI contractor, Seles helped conduct the surveillance and interrogations of Harmonic Bliss members, helped flip Don Hocking, and is in charge of communications in this operation.

Francisco Seles

Intelligence analyst, age 42

STR 7 **CON** 13 **DEX** 10 **INT** 16 **POW** 16 **CHA** 16

HP 10 **SAN** 61 **BREAKING POINT** 48

BONDS: Hazel (wife) 16, the running club 16, NSA colleagues 11, Odette Jackson (Delta Green) 11.

DISORDERS: Depersonalization disorder.

SKILLS: Anthropology 40%, Athletics 60%, Bureaucracy 50%, Computer Science 80%, Criminology 60%, Firearms 40%, Foreign Language (Arabic) 50%, Foreign Language (Spanish) 50%, Foreign Language (Greek) 40%, History 40%, HUMINT 50%, Occult 70%, SIGINT 80%, Unnatural 18%.

ATTACKS: Unlicensed "Baby Glock" 9 mm pistol (with no serial number) 40%, damage 1D10.

Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4–2.

Don Hocking

A burly, middle-aged white man, Don has a long, gray ponytail and round John Lennon glasses, usually over a Henley shirt or a Baja sweatshirt and baggy old-man jeans.

The Agents' weaselly man on the inside seems all right at first, just nervous and sleep-deprived. He starts to get twitchy and irritable after the first day. A **Psychotherapy** roll can tell his sanity is fraying and that it would take only one hard shock to send him into a total breakdown.

While Don was a mellow, peaceful type before the Galworthys disappeared, he purchased a handgun and obtained a concealed-carry permit immediately after agreeing to work with the FBI. He doesn't want to take it into Harmonic Bliss meetings…at first…but as the operation wears on, the fear goes to work on him. He's likely to ask Agents for advice about gun-toting, in fact. Being told to *not carry it*, however, is advice he ignores once they get to Arcadia Junction.

Don Hocking

Informant on the edge, age 54

STR 15 **CON** 13 **DEX** 10 **INT** 11 **POW** 8 **CHA** 10

HP 14 **SAN** 20 **BREAKING POINT** 12

ATTACKS: Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4.

.380 ACP semi-automatic pistol 40%, damage 1D8.

Estelle Knox

Knox has a lot of poorly-maintained shaggy black hair and wide, bulging brown eyes that don't seem to blink often enough, over a weak chin and a strong mouth. She usually dresses like Stevie Nicks: scarves, bangles, long flowing skirts.

Estelle Knox

Maestro of secret symphonies, age 36

STR 9 **CON** 10 **DEX** 15 **INT** 15 **POW** 17 **CHA** 15

HP 10 **SAN** 20 **BREAKING POINT** 3

ATTACKS: Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4–1 (or 1D4).

UNNATURAL STRENGTH: After she has embraced Kaughrhun Kaal, Estelle's STR goes up to 14 and her HP go up to 12. This is a burst of hysterical strength that leaves her sore and trembling afterwards, but she does not care and neither should we.

Harmonic Bliss Cultist (Standard)

Estelle Knox's followers are diffident individuals, lower middle-class, easily led, hesitant, out-of-shape, preferring talk to action. For them to break from negotiations and speak sharply to someone—especially an armed authority—is out of character and, quite frankly, an act of tremendous courage. A combat roll of any kind is at a –20% penalty. (This is already applied to their unarmed attack listing, below.)

These people are vulnerable to bullying. If someone yells at them or makes a credible threat, it costs the standard Bliss cultist 0/1 SAN. With a failure, the cultist collapses into hysterical tears, cringing and hiding. (The SAN loss rises to 0/1D4 if a weapon and/or a badge is brandished.) Inflicting this severe emotional trauma costs an Agent 0/1 SAN due to helplessness.

Blissite

Desperate for a leader, age 19 to 55

STR 10 **CON** 8 **DEX** 8 **INT** 10 **POW** 7 **CHA** 8

HP 10 **SAN** 35 **BREAKING POINT** 28

ATTACKS: Unarmed 20%, damage 1D4–1.

Harmonic Bliss Cultist (Modified)

These stats represent a Blissite who has been subjected to Kaughrhun Kaal spores, after Kaughrhun Kaal realizes its pawns are under threat and floods them with adrenaline and endorphins. The Blissites are suddenly amped up. Anyone who bothers with a **HUMINT** roll can tell they're unusually agitated, breathing heavily, and flushed. They can't be pushed into a sobbing fit by verbal abuse like an unmodified cultist, and there's no SAN cost for bullying them. They feel no pain and are ready to fight. Their unarmed or melee weapon attack rolls are at +20% (already applied to their unarmed attack listing, below). All other actions are at –20%.

Blissite (Under the Influence)

Filled with joyful rage

STR 16 **CON** 14 **DEX** 13 **INT** 10 **POW** 7 **CHA** 8

HP 15 **SAN** 30 **BREAKING POINT** 28

ATTACKS: Unarmed 60%, damage 1D4.

Brandon Murphy

Murphy is a lean, leathery fellow whose usual expression seems to be a leer. Wears a beat-down straw cattleman hat, flannel shirts, and tight jeans with a big buckle over worn, plain cowboy boots. His hair is collar-length, greasy, and starting to grey. His eyes are a cold blue and his teeth nicotine-yellow.

A small-time grifter, Murphy has an on-again, off-again relationship with mind-altering chemicals that has left his behavior somewhat resistant to Kaughrhun Kaal's meddling. He's used to talking to cops while drunk or high and he can endure a bad flashback with some measure of élan. Thus, when Kaughrhun Kaal floods him with epinephrine, he rides it like a meth rush and doesn't lose control.

Brandon Murphy

Would-be messiah, age 41

STR 14 **CON** 9 **DEX** 13 **INT** 12 **POW** 11 **CHA** 13

HP 12 **SAN** 50 **BREAKING POINT** 44

ATTACKS: Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4.

.32 Colt Cobra revolver 40%, damage 1D8.

Possessed Feral Dogs

It's easiest to handle this pack of 17 dogs as a single entity, especially since the will of each dog is utterly bent to the designs of Kaughrhun Kaal. These dogs are ill-fed, rangy beasts on the scale of retriever, Doberman and boxer. They drool and stumble unnervingly, signs of their long-term TCE exposure. But they are weirdly organized and well-coordinated.

When this collective attacks, it tries to encircle and swarm, working together so that one dog distracts while another darts in to bite ankles or tear at a wrist. Out in the open, they get one attack per three dogs (round up). In an enclosed space, it's half that many.

The dogs fight without showing pain or fear. Assume any successful gunshot leaves a dog unable to fight. Any other attack incapacitates a dog if it does 7+ points of damage.

Once the pack's down to five dogs, they spin *in unison* and flee in five different directions. Then it's up to the agents to decide whether they want to finish off all the twitching, bleeding, weirdly-not-barking mammals in the dust, or if they want to conserve their ammo.

Possessed Feral Dogs

An unnatural pack

STR 5 **CON** 10 **POW** 10 for the group **DEX** 12

HP See description above

ATTACKS: Bite 30%, damage 1D6.

COOPERATION: If the dogs work together, their combined STR score is effectively 14.

SANITY LOSS: 0/1D4 when their unnatural behavior becomes obvious.

The Carpet of Vermin

As with the dog pack, this writhing mat of scuttling mice, rats, shrews and voles is handled as a single entity. In this instance, however, a single gunshot is unlikely to take out more than one or two of the hundreds of component animals. The effects of this are handled with armor and the swarm's high hit points.

Carpet of Vermin

Biting everything

STR 5 **CON** 5 **POW** 5 **DEX** 20

HP 35

ATTACKS: The swarm does 1D4–1 damage to every individual in reach every turn, or 1D6 to someone who has fallen and become blanketed with them. What's "in reach" is up to the Handler, but the full swarm is probably three to five meters across.

ARMOR: Damage from any attack is reduced to a single point unless it's fire or a weapon that has a Kill Radius—those do full damage. Lethality rolls automatically fail, inflicting ordinary HP damage.

Compressed air does 1D8 for every 1,000 kPa (150 psi) pressure, if that comes up.

Anyone who falls and starts rolling to crush the creatures does regular unarmed damage, though at the risk of taking more damage from being blanketed.

Driving over them with a car does 1D6 damage.

Any clever impromptu plan does 1D10+2 damage. Any stupid impromptu plan does 1D4.

SANITY LOSS: The first time the critter stampede is seen, it costs 0/1 **SAN** from the unnatural. Getting attacked costs 0/1D4 **SAN**. Anyone who falls and is engulfed loses another 1/1D4 **SAN**.

Kaughrhun Kaal

For millennia, this being appeared to be an inert mass of semi-organic compounds embedded in the Earth. A biologist might say it was an "inert-organic mass," a geologist a "sediment layer composed of biological runoff." But its stony biology was so slow and strange, it would be nearly impossible for the unenlightened to determine it was alive at all. Only odd, cloudy brown crystals protruded from it to the surface, waiting to detect the chemicals the being feeds upon during its periodic frenzies. Now that is has woken, it has reconstituted itself, grown and expanded—corkscrew-like—ten meters beneath the earth.

While it is buried, the creature is seen mainly as long, rigid, ropily segmented grey limbs, each topped by a motile and wholly dextrous blood-red pad like the end of an elephant's trunk. Inside each pad is a brown crystalline spike that can be retracted, and, if need be, forcibly extruded in a strong enough manner to punch a hole through a stainless steel plate. The limbs are strong and resilient, capable of lifting and throwing a small car, and all but immune to small arms fire, but their reach is limited to about 3 meters.

The rest of Kaughrhun Kaal is a submerged, slug-like shape. It moves, always slowly, by writhing like a snail or a slug and pulling itself along with its limbs. Its top speed is about that of a walking human being.

Kaughrhun Kaal

God of stone and blood

STR 35 **CON** 45 **INT** 12 **POW** 30 **DEX** 15

HP 40

ARMOR: 10 points when mobile or 40 points when immobile

ATTACKS: Spore blast 80%; no damage, but the target is exposed to spores as described on page 151.

Bludgeoning strike 70%, damage 3D6.

Draining nasal spike 70%, drains 1D8 HP and 1D4 STR; for every HP it drains in this fashion, it can remain awake and mobile for one hour; Armor Piercing 5.

Randomly thrown object 50%, damage 3D6.

FIREPROOF: Kaughrhun Kaal takes no damage from flames, regardless of intensity.

HUGE: Kaughrhun Kaal is a huge creature, so Lethality tests against it automatically fail, inflicting HP damage equal to the Lethality rating.

REACH: If Kaughrhun Kaal is more than three meters from its target, it can't reach with its arms or spike. It can throw rocks, fence-posts, corpse-chunks and the like more than a full kilometer. If you're more 500 m from it, the object hits the turn after it was launched and an attempt to **Dodge** is at +20%.

BLOOD-HUNGRY: Kaughrhun Kaal needs fresh blood to move. For every hour of mobility, it requires two or three liters of mammalian blood. Draining an average person dry is good for three or four hours. With a vast supply (such as a day's output from an industrial meat processor, or the results of rampaging through a high-density feed lot), it could remain mobile for about a month. It doesn't have to constantly move to pursue its goals. And it can keep a living mammal alive, using just enough blood to make itself responsive while feeding its own energies into the mammal in lieu of food and water.

MTBE AWARENESS: Kaughrhun Kaal requires MTBE to think and to create paranormal effects: **CREATE GLYPH OF HARMONY, FLOOD WITH ECSTASY, REFORMAT BRAIN,** and **REFORMAT BODY.** For our purposes, Kaughrhun Kaal can store up to 100 "units" of MTBE. How much it can gain from a site is up to you.

CREATE GLYPH OF HARMONY: Costs 50 MTBE. See **GLYPH OF HARMONY** on page 150. This is an expensive effort, which is why there's only one glyph.

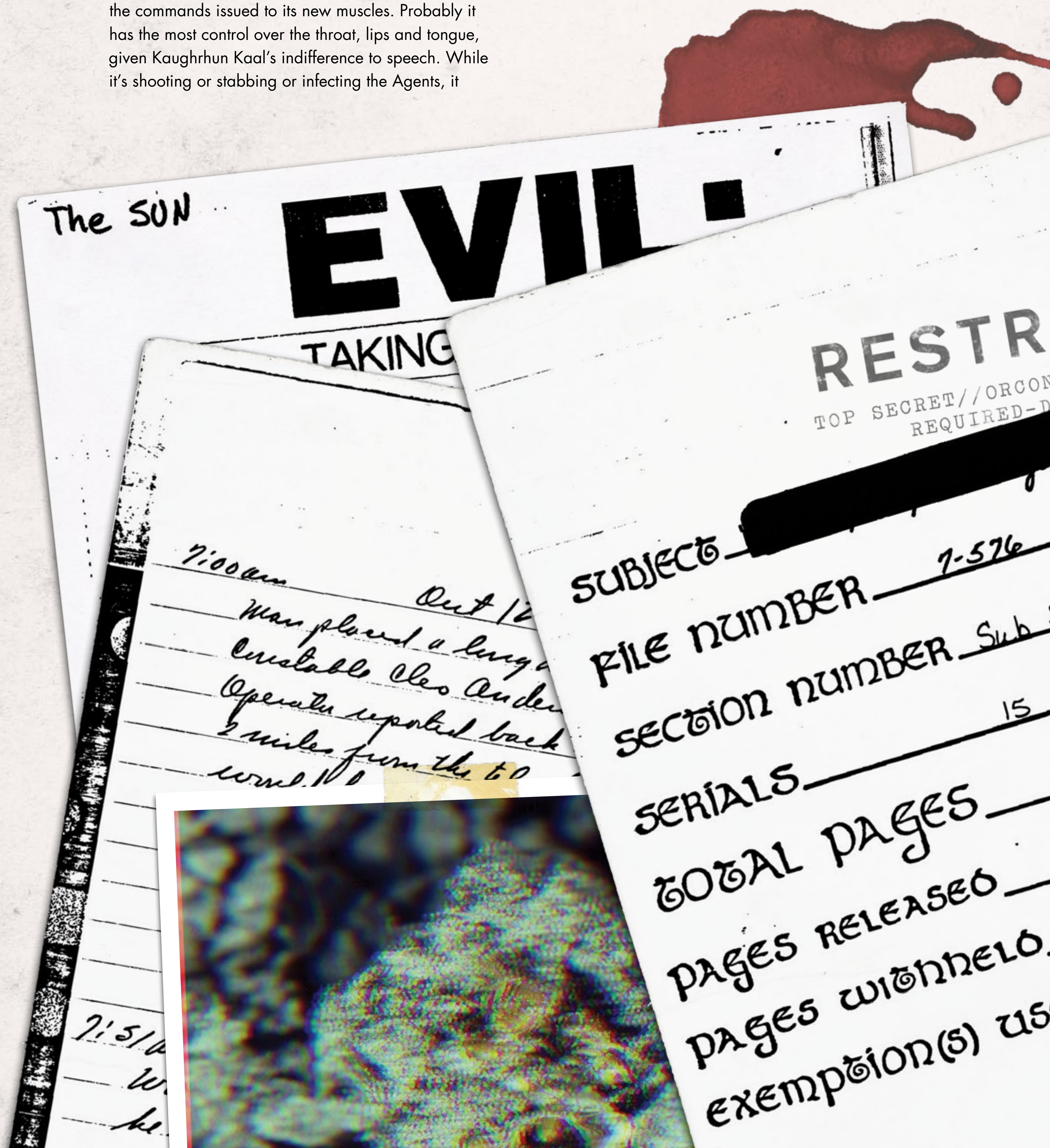
FLOOD WITH ECSTASY: Costs 1 MTBE. This works only on a conditioned human. "Conditioned" in this case means "heavily infested with spores and has also been affected by the Glyph of Harmony." People who have undergone this treatment become hesitant to do anything they think their new master won't like. Each such an action costs 1 **SAN** from the unnatural. Every successive treatment raises **SAN** cost: 1/1D4, then 1/1D6, 1/1D8 and capping at 1/1D10.

REFORMAT BRAIN: Costs 20 MTBE. This process is highly involved and time-consuming. Kaughrhun Kaal essentially removes the human's brain and nervous system, replacing them with spores. This requires about thirty hours of uninterrupted effort. The entity thus created can pass most superficial medical tests and can function mostly normally. But it cannot talk, because Kaughrhun Kaal doesn't speak English or care to learn. The reformatted host is entirely an outgrowth of Kaughrhun Kaal's consciousness, a remote drone.

RECONFIGURE BODY: Costs 30 MTBE. Instead of replacing a target's brain and nerve tissue, it replaces muscle and skin tissue. Animals (or people) thus treated are clearly grotesque Things That Should Not Be, and seeing them costs 0/1D4 **SAN** from the unnatural. If done on a human, the host retains some memories and sense of identity, and may be able to struggle against the commands issued to its new muscles. Probably it has the most control over the throat, lips and tongue, given Kaughrhun Kaal's indifference to speech. While it's shooting or stabbing or infecting the Agents, it might also be screaming for help, apologizing, or giving valuable information.

RITUALS: See **MTBE AWARENESS,** above.

SANITY LOSS: None to see it in statue form. 1D6/1D10 from the unnatural to see it animate.



The SUN

EVIL

TAKING

7:00am Oct 1

Was placed a lung

Constable Cleo Ander

Operator reported back

2 miles from the to

7:51

RESTR

TOP SECRET//ORCON

REQUIRED-D

SUBJECT [redacted]

FILE NUMBER 7-576

SECTION NUMBER Sub

SERIALS 15

TOTAL PAGES

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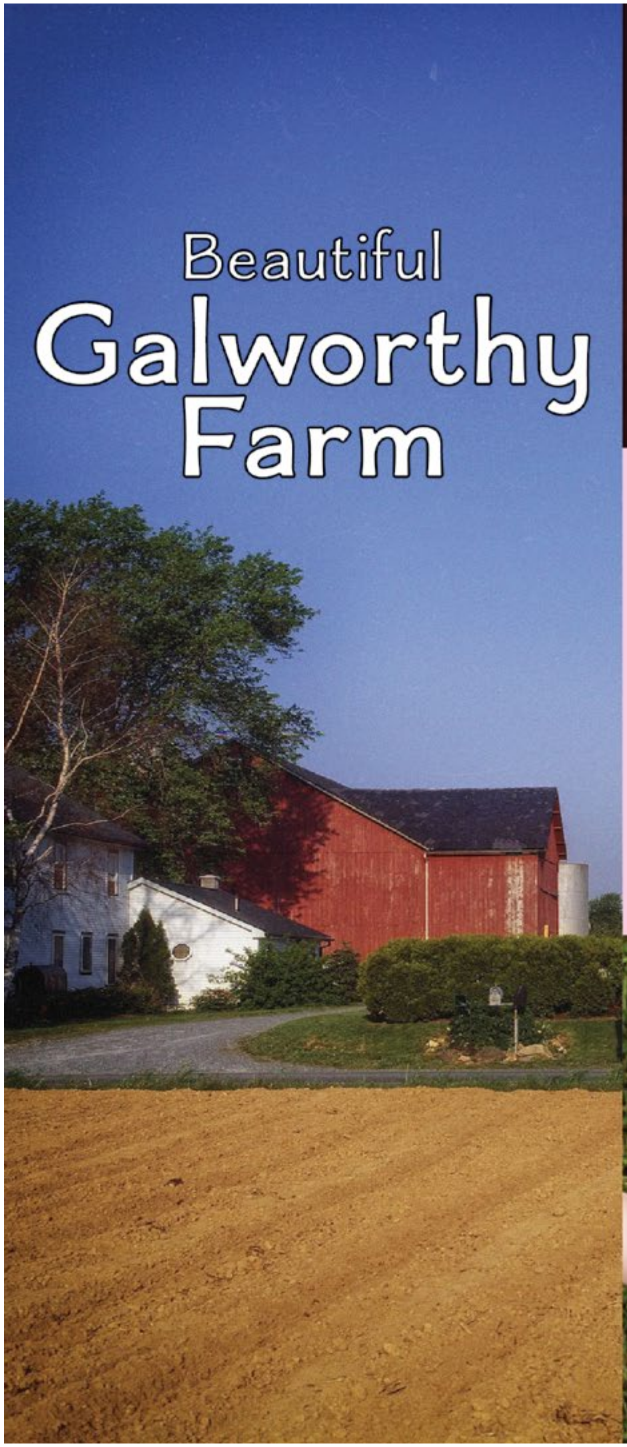


Beautiful
Galworthy Farm

For more information, contact
Harmonic Bliss Industries, Inc. at
719 West Locust Street
Hanover KS 34300
(620) 555-BLISS

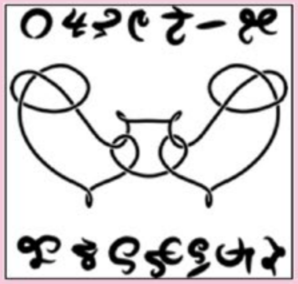
HARMONIC BLISS
is
Your Key to Happiness And Success!

Have you ever noticed that some people seem *"magnetic"* as if they had a "magic key" that made all life's problems just disappear? With one phone call they can clear up their credit problems, they don't get tax audits and when something does go wrong, they know **JUST THE PERSON** to help them sort it out?

IT'S NOT A CONSPIRACY! These people have *"social capital"* that helps them get along and **YOU CAN GET IT TOO.**

HARMONIC BLISS is the answer!

Human beings are meant to be together, but the unnatural technologies with which we surround ourselves harm our ability to understand one another and get *"in tune."*



Our tested and proven techniques remove barriers between human sensations, enabling us to defeat envy, anger, and emotional resistance. By understanding the patterns and structures that underlie reality, you can "counter-program" the harmful social codes keeping you antagonistic or subservient to authority, replacing them with genuine compassion and the understanding that will make "YOU" the *"magnetic attractor,"* surrounded by friends and admirers!

*Just consider some of these testimonials from **REAL PEOPLE**, people like you, who have benefitted from **HARMONIC BLISS**.*

"Before I studied **HARMONIC BLISS**, I was unemployed and depressed. I had the education, but I couldn't get past the job interviews. But after only three sessions, I isolated my self-defeating lifescript and ELIMINATED IT. I got a job one week later!"

-Jason, Sioux Falls

"My personal relationships were a mess. I couldn't talk to my kids without a big fight, and with my husband it was even worse. I was even contemplating divorce. Then I joined **HARMONIC BLISS** and started seeing things "their way." Now my marriage and family life is better than ever!"

-Eden, Firefly Corners

"The doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong with me. I was listless, forgetful and in constant pain, but their "tests" consistently came up "negative"! **HARMONIC BLISS** showed me that my body was hurting me because my heart was cut off and isolated. A sick soul needed soul medicine, and the BESt soul medicine is **HARMONIC BLISS**!"

-Gina, St. Louis

?

Do you want deeper friendships?

Do you want to be an "easy dealer" with people around you?

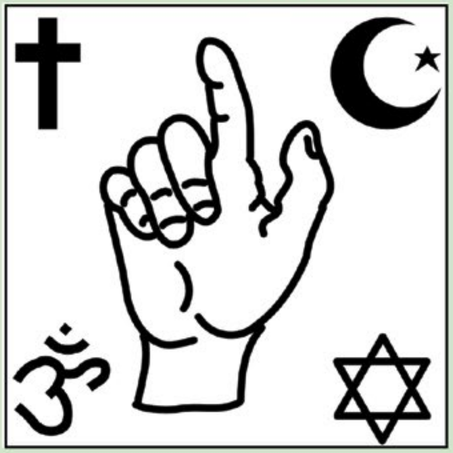
Do you want to influence people and take control of your future?

Do you want to be a functioning part of the world instead of struggling against it?

!

In just six weeks, *HARMONIC BLISS* can teach you to...

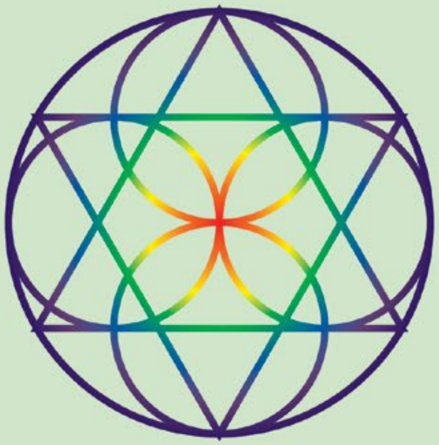
- Identify the "friction points" in your relationships.
- Master the "verbal rhythms" that let you "synchronize" emotionally with *ANYONE YOU TALK TO.*
- Break negative "interference patterns" and clarify your understanding of the world!



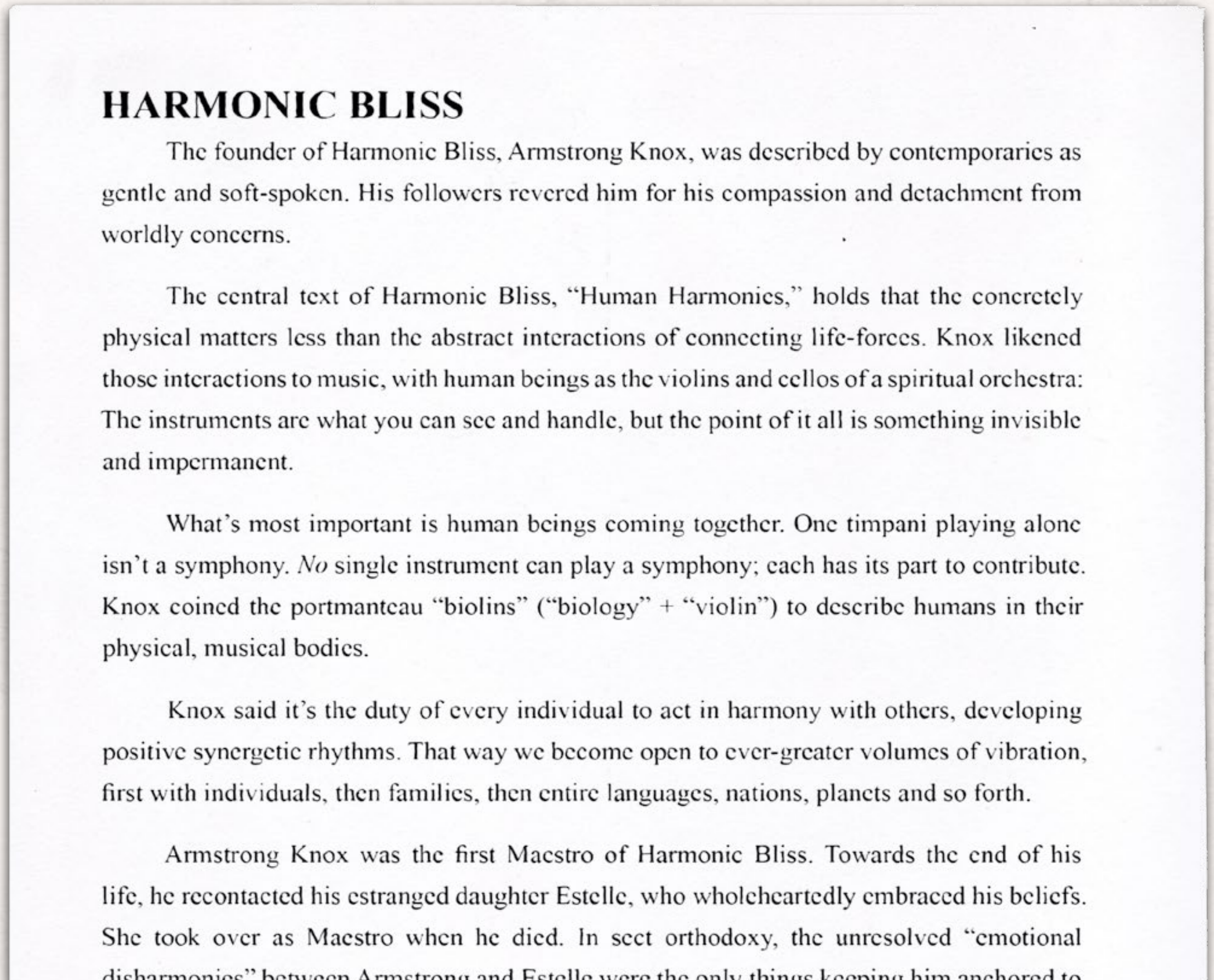
HARMONIC BLISS IS NOT A "CULT"!

It is a spiritual study compatible with all religions and belief systems. The faithful from all traditions are welcome, as are disbelievers.

A BETTER LIFE IS WAITING FOR YOU. WHY ARE YOU WAITING FOR IT?



Report on Harmonic Bliss



HARMONIC BLISS

The founder of Harmonic Bliss, Armstrong Knox, was described by contemporaries as gentle and soft-spoken. His followers revered him for his compassion and detachment from worldly concerns.

The central text of Harmonic Bliss, "Human Harmonics," holds that the concretely physical matters less than the abstract interactions of connecting life-forces. Knox likened those interactions to music, with human beings as the violins and cellos of a spiritual orchestra: The instruments are what you can see and handle, but the point of it all is something invisible and impermanent.

What's most important is human beings coming together. One timpani playing alone isn't a symphony. *No* single instrument can play a symphony; each has its part to contribute. Knox coined the portmanteau "biolins" ("biology" + "violin") to describe humans in their physical, musical bodies.

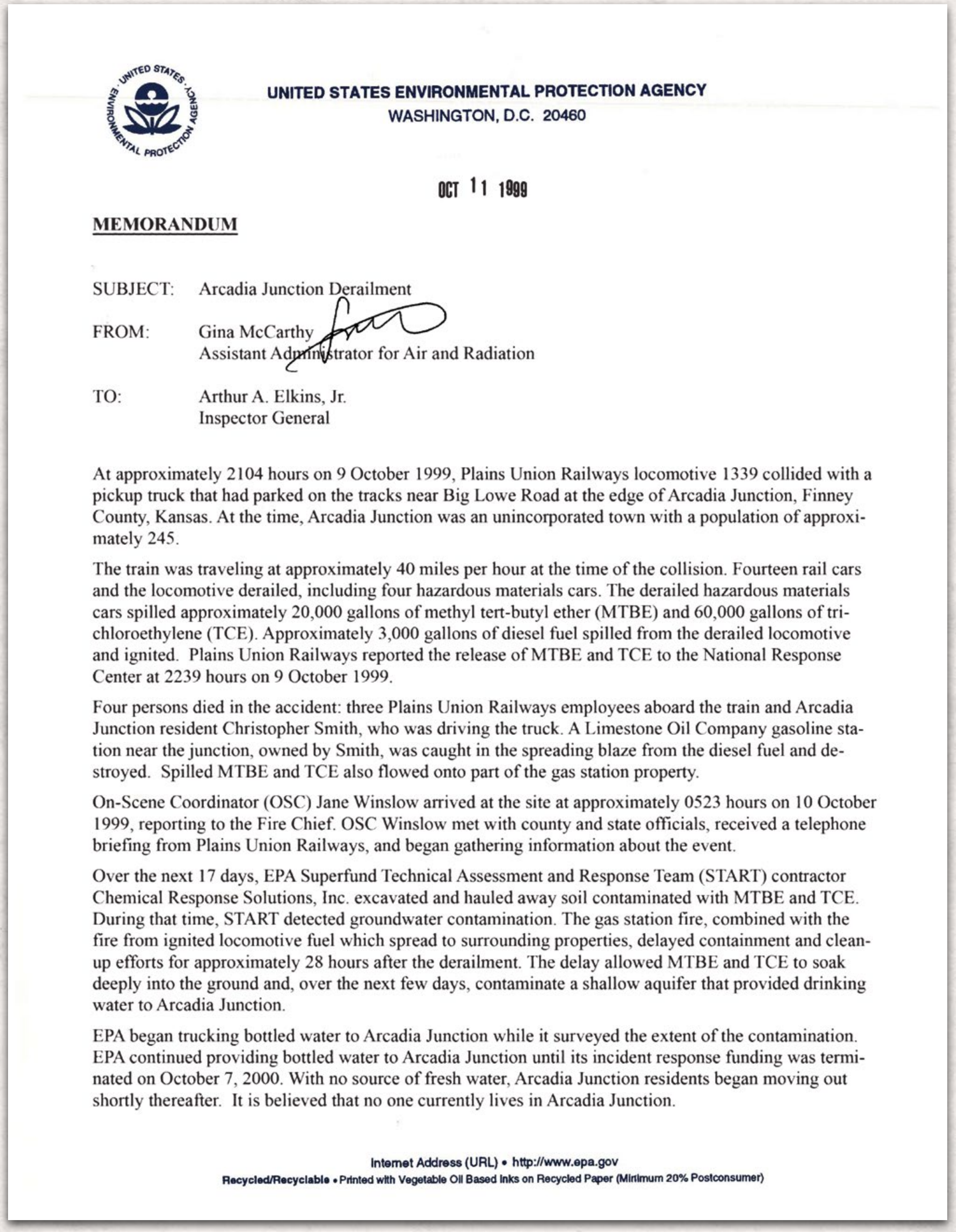
Knox said it's the duty of every individual to act in harmony with others, developing positive synergetic rhythms. That way we become open to ever-greater volumes of vibration, first with individuals, then families, then entire languages, nations, planets and so forth.

Armstrong Knox was the first Maestro of Harmonic Bliss. Towards the end of his life, he recontacted his estranged daughter Estelle, who wholeheartedly embraced his beliefs. She took over as Maestro when he died. In sect orthodoxy, the unresolved "emotional disharmonies" between Armstrong and Estelle were the only things keeping him anchored to his corporeal form. Once those were resolved, he was able to "move on to a higher harmonic."

Harmonic Bliss has always been local to the Kansas City area, with no more than a few dozen active members at any time.

Harmonic Bliss has apparently led a few members to stay in abusive relationships. But compared to cults that drag recruits off to isolated areas, deprive them of sleep and ask them to sign over their property, it seems relatively benign.

EPA Pollution Report



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OCT 11 1999

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Arcadia Junction Derailment

FROM: Gina McCarthy
Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation

TO: Arthur A. Elkins, Jr.
Inspector General

At approximately 2104 hours on 9 October 1999, Plains Union Railways locomotive 1339 collided with a pickup truck that had parked on the tracks near Big Lowe Road at the edge of Arcadia Junction, Finney County, Kansas. At the time, Arcadia Junction was an unincorporated town with a population of approximately 245.

The train was traveling at approximately 40 miles per hour at the time of the collision. Fourteen rail cars and the locomotive derailed, including four hazardous materials cars. The derailed hazardous materials cars spilled approximately 20,000 gallons of methyl tert-butyl ether (MTBE) and 60,000 gallons of trichloroethylene (TCE). Approximately 3,000 gallons of diesel fuel spilled from the derailed locomotive and ignited. Plains Union Railways reported the release of MTBE and TCE to the National Response Center at 2239 hours on 9 October 1999.

Four persons died in the accident: three Plains Union Railways employees aboard the train and Arcadia Junction resident Christopher Smith, who was driving the truck. A Limestone Oil Company gasoline station near the junction, owned by Smith, was caught in the spreading blaze from the diesel fuel and destroyed. Spilled MTBE and TCE also flowed onto part of the gas station property.

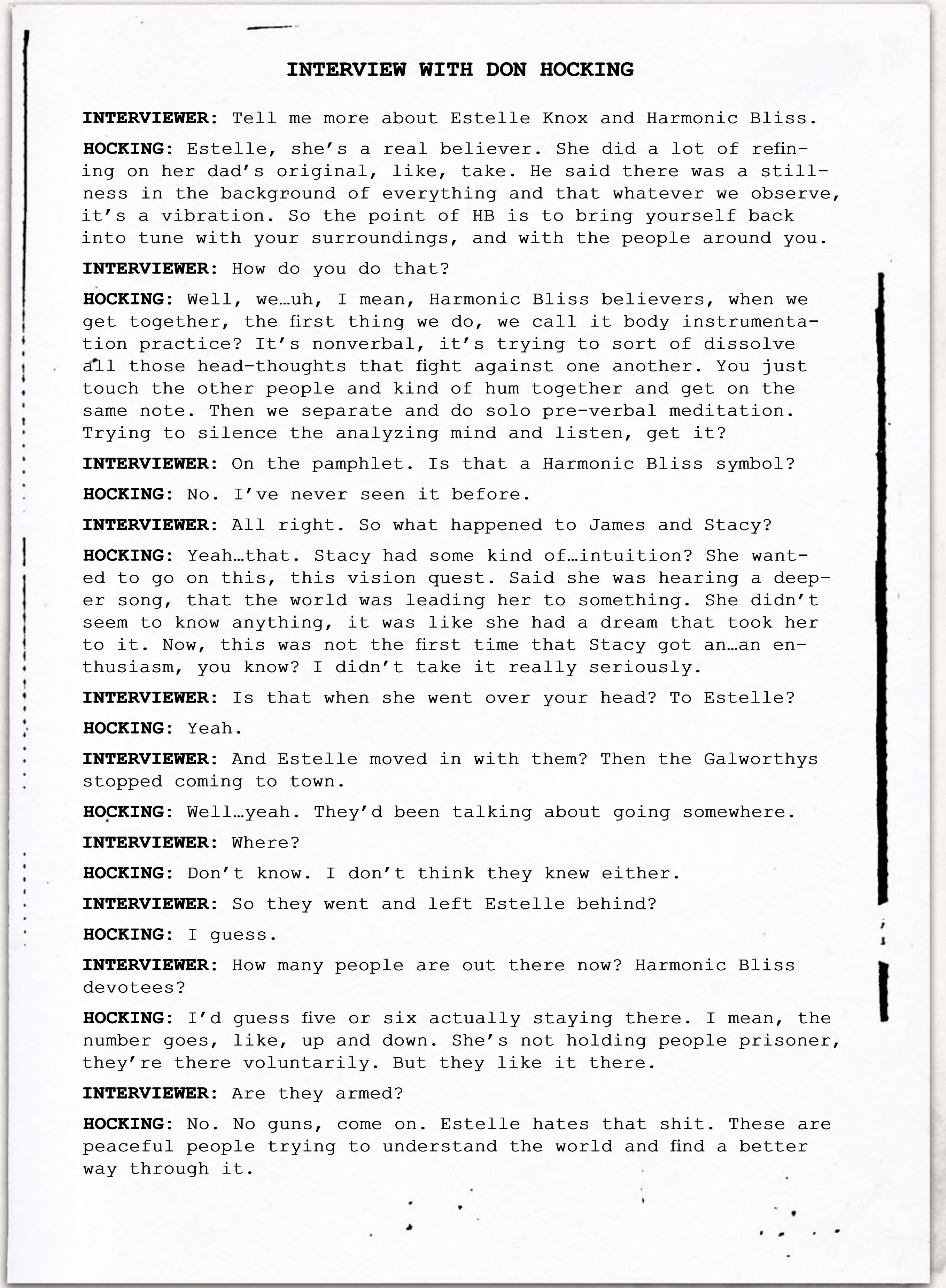
On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Jane Winslow arrived at the site at approximately 0523 hours on 10 October 1999, reporting to the Fire Chief. OSC Winslow met with county and state officials, received a telephone briefing from Plains Union Railways, and began gathering information about the event.

Over the next 17 days, EPA Superfund Technical Assessment and Response Team (START) contractor Chemical Response Solutions, Inc. excavated and hauled away soil contaminated with MTBE and TCE. During that time, START detected groundwater contamination. The gas station fire, combined with the fire from ignited locomotive fuel which spread to surrounding properties, delayed containment and cleanup efforts for approximately 28 hours after the derailment. The delay allowed MTBE and TCE to soak deeply into the ground and, over the next few days, contaminate a shallow aquifer that provided drinking water to Arcadia Junction.

EPA began trucking bottled water to Arcadia Junction while it surveyed the extent of the contamination. EPA continued providing bottled water to Arcadia Junction until its incident response funding was terminated on October 7, 2000. With no source of fresh water, Arcadia Junction residents began moving out shortly thereafter. It is believed that no one currently lives in Arcadia Junction.

Internet Address (URL) • http://www.epa.gov
Recycled/Recyclable • Printed with Vegetable Oil Based Inks on Recycled Paper (Minimum 20% Postconsumer)

Hocking Interview Handout



INTERVIEW WITH DON HOCKING

INTERVIEWER: Tell me more about Estelle Knox and Harmonic Bliss.

HOCKING: Estelle, she's a real believer. She did a lot of refining on her dad's original, like, take. He said there was a stillness in the background of everything and that whatever we observe, it's a vibration. So the point of HB is to bring yourself back into tune with your surroundings, and with the people around you.

INTERVIEWER: How do you do that?

HOCKING: Well, we…uh, I mean, Harmonic Bliss believers, when we get together, the first thing we do, we call it body instrumentation practice? It's nonverbal, it's trying to sort of dissolve all those head-thoughts that fight against one another. You just touch the other people and kind of hum together and get on the same note. Then we separate and do solo pre-verbal meditation. Trying to silence the analyzing mind and listen, get it?

INTERVIEWER: On the pamphlet. Is that a Harmonic Bliss symbol?

HOCKING: No. I've never seen it before.

INTERVIEWER: All right. So what happened to James and Stacy?

HOCKING: Yeah…that. Stacy had some kind of…intuition? She wanted to go on this, this vision quest. Said she was hearing a deeper song, that the world was leading her to something. She didn't seem to know anything, it was like she had a dream that took her to it. Now, this was not the first time that Stacy got an…an enthusiasm, you know? I didn't take it really seriously.

INTERVIEWER: Is that when she went over your head? To Estelle?

HOCKING: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And Estelle moved in with them? Then the Galworthys stopped coming to town.

HOCKING: Well…yeah. They'd been talking about going somewhere.

INTERVIEWER: Where?

HOCKING: Don't know. I don't think they knew either.

INTERVIEWER: So they went and left Estelle behind?

HOCKING: I guess.

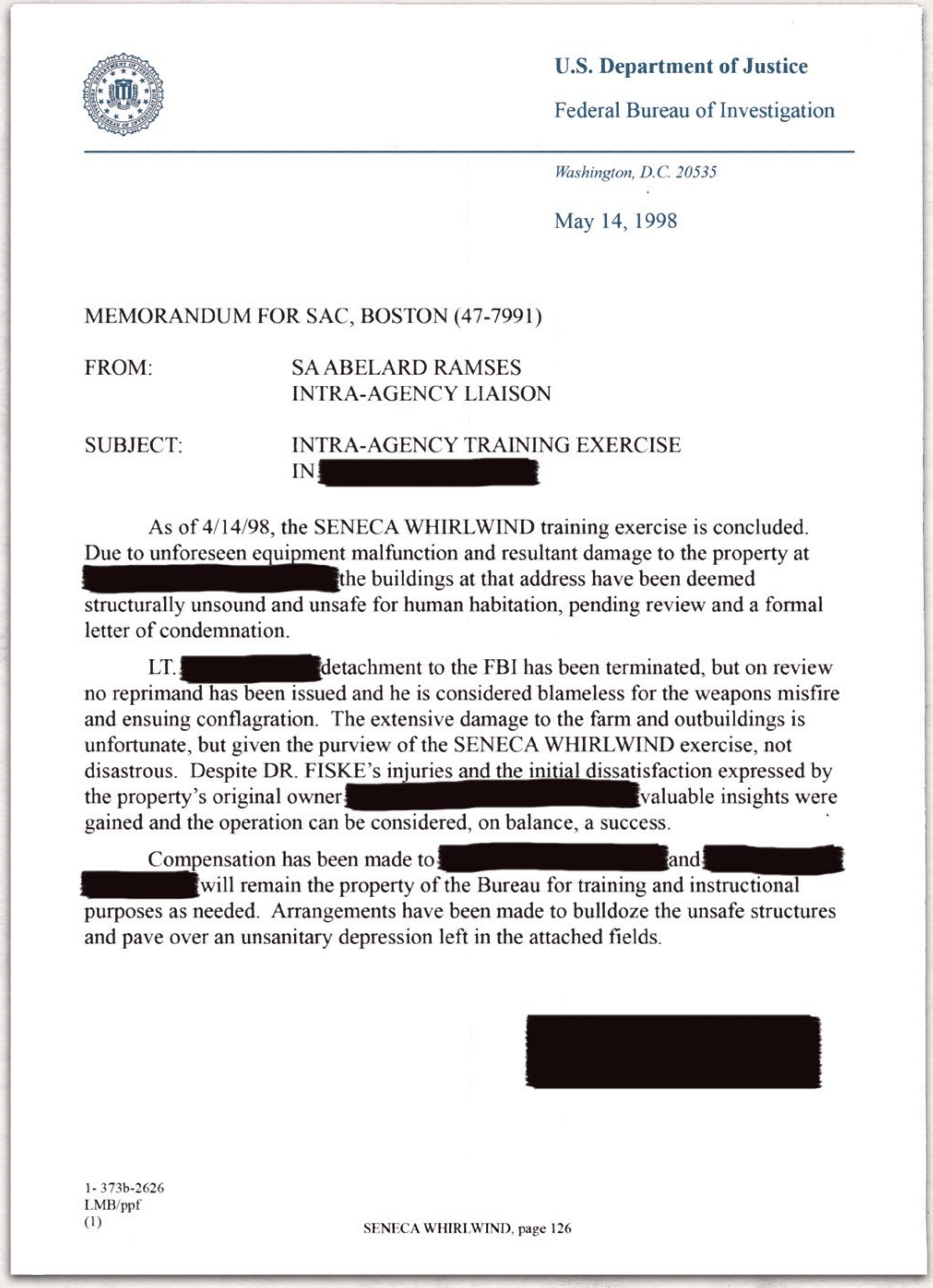
INTERVIEWER: How many people are out there now? Harmonic Bliss devotees?

HOCKING: I'd guess five or six actually staying there. I mean, the number goes, like, up and down. She's not holding people prisoner, they're there voluntarily. But they like it there.

INTERVIEWER: Are they armed?

HOCKING: No. No guns, come on. Estelle hates that shit. These are peaceful people trying to understand the world and find a better way through it.

SENECA WHIRLWIND Memo



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Washington, D.C. 20535

May 14, 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR SAC, BOSTON (47-7991)

FROM: SA ABELARD RAMSES
INTRA-AGENCY LIAISON

SUBJECT: INTRA-AGENCY TRAINING EXERCISE
IN [redacted]

As of 4/14/98, the SENECA WHIRLWIND training exercise is concluded. Due to unforeseen equipment malfunction and resultant damage to the property at [redacted] the buildings at that address have been deemed structurally unsound and unsafe for human habitation, pending review and a formal letter of condemnation.

LT. [redacted] detachment to the FBI has been terminated, but on review no reprimand has been issued and he is considered blameless for the weapons misfire and ensuing conflagration. The extensive damage to the farm and outbuildings is unfortunate, but given the purview of the SENECA WHIRLWIND exercise, not disastrous. Despite DR. FISKE's injuries and the initial dissatisfaction expressed by the property's original owner [redacted] valuable insights were gained and the operation can be considered, on balance, a success.

Compensation has been made to [redacted] and [redacted] will remain the property of the Bureau for training and instructional purposes as needed. Arrangements have been made to bulldoze the unsafe structures and pave over an unsanitary depression left in the attached fields.

[redacted]

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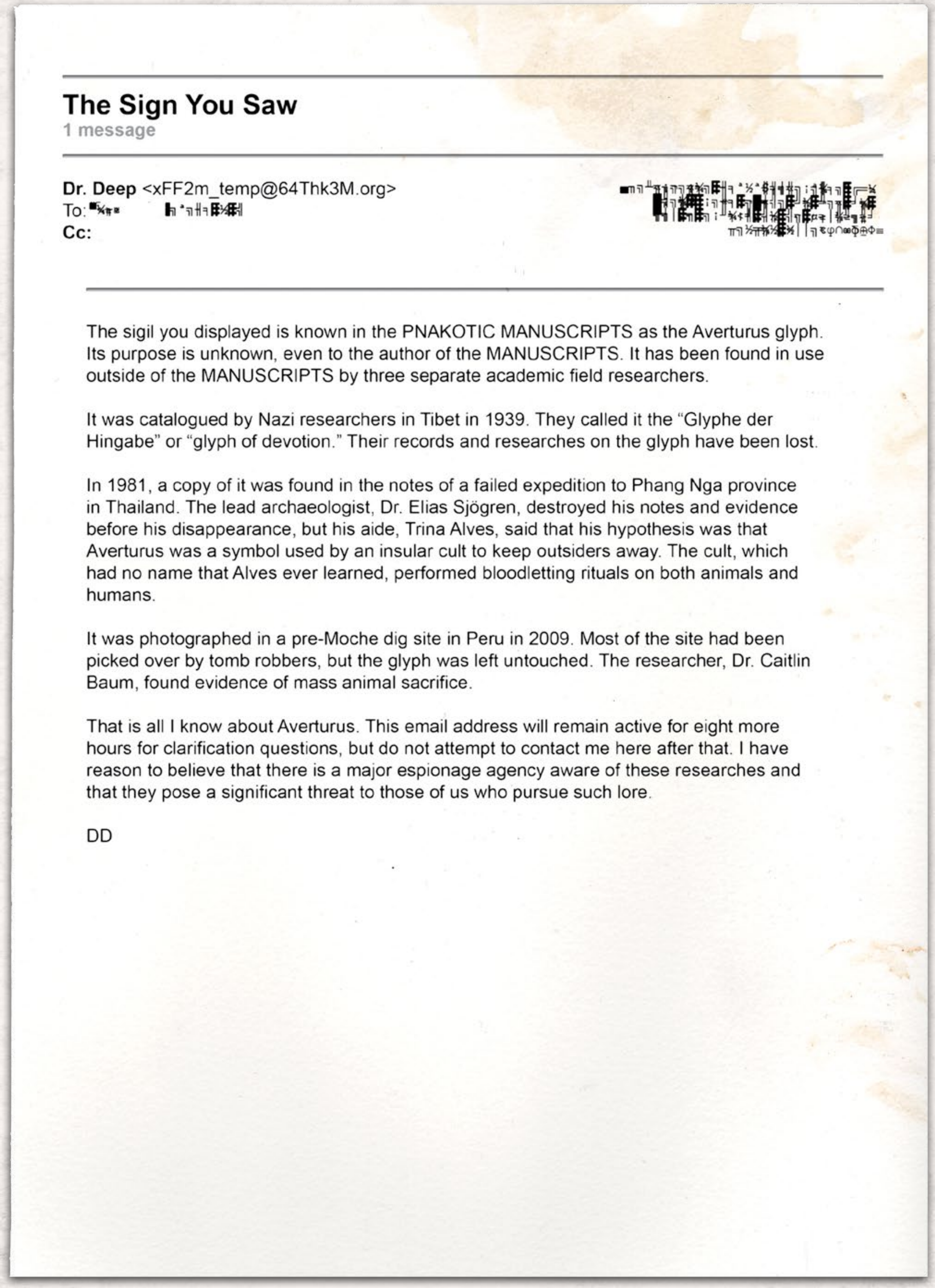
SENECA WHIRLWIND, page 126

Dr. Deep's Analysis Handout



The Sign You Saw

1 message

Dr. Deep <xFF2m_temp@64Thk3M.org>
To: [illegible]
Cc:

[illegible]

The sigil you displayed is known in the PNAKOTIC MANUSCRIPTS as the Averturus glyph. Its purpose is unknown, even to the author of the MANUSCRIPTS. It has been found in use outside of the MANUSCRIPTS by three separate academic field researchers.

It was catalogued by Nazi researchers in Tibet in 1939. They called it the "Glyphe der Hingabe" or "glyph of devotion." Their records and researches on the glyph have been lost.

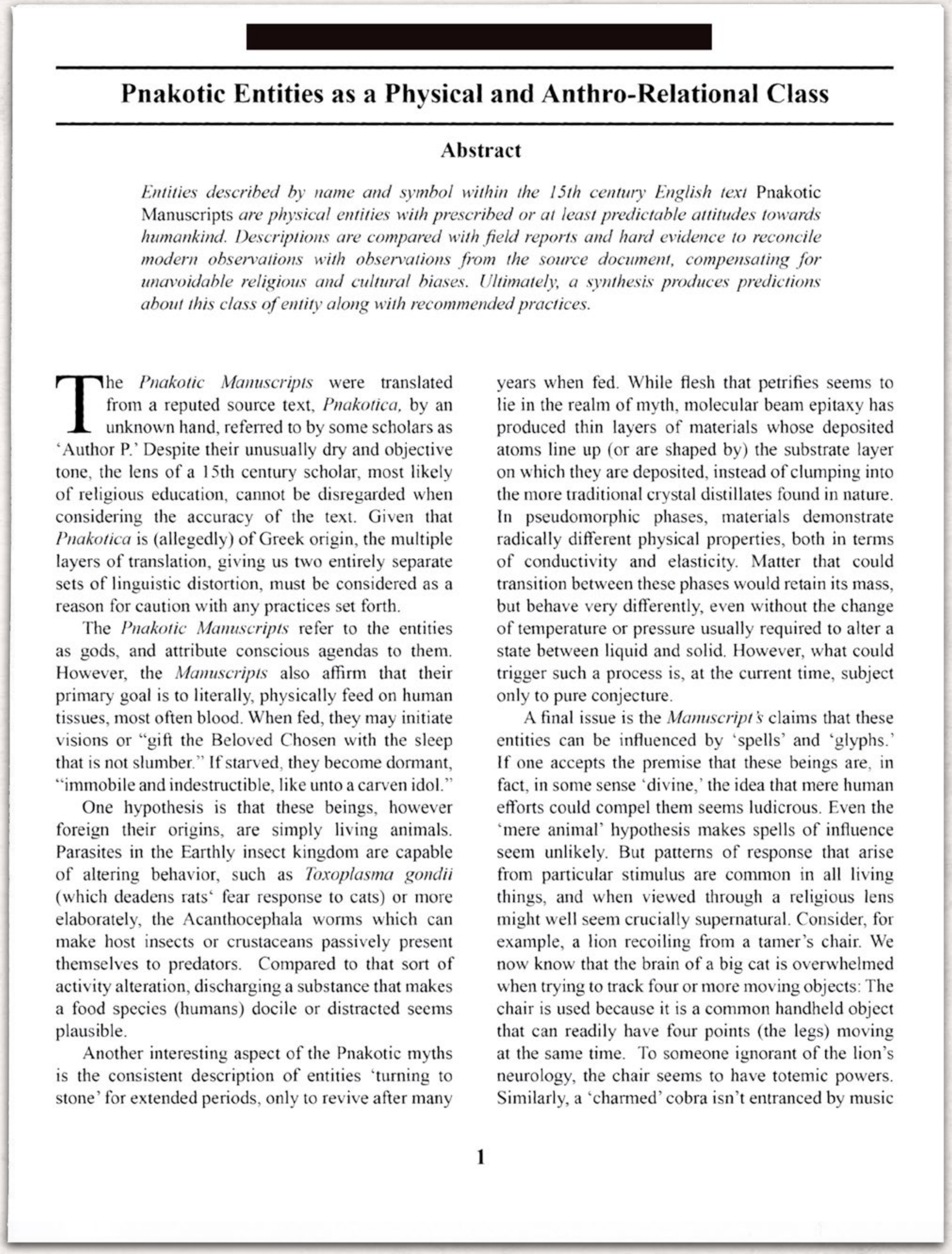
In 1981, a copy of it was found in the notes of a failed expedition to Phang Nga province in Thailand. The lead archaeologist, Dr. Elias Sjögren, destroyed his notes and evidence before his disappearance, but his aide, Trina Alves, said that his hypothesis was that Averturus was a symbol used by an insular cult to keep outsiders away. The cult, which had no name that Alves ever learned, performed bloodletting rituals on both animals and humans.

It was photographed in a pre-Moche dig site in Peru in 2009. Most of the site had been picked over by tomb robbers, but the glyph was left untouched. The researcher, Dr. Caitlin Baum, found evidence of mass animal sacrifice.

That is all I know about Averturus. This email address will remain active for eight more hours for clarification questions, but do not attempt to contact me here after that. I have reason to believe that there is a major espionage agency aware of these researches and that they pose a significant threat to those of us who pursue such lore.

DD

Pnakotic Entities Report Page 1



[redacted]

Pnakotic Entities as a Physical and Anthro-Relational Class

Abstract

Entities described by name and symbol within the 15th century English text Pnakotic Manuscripts *are physical entities with prescribed or at least predictable attitudes towards humankind. Descriptions are compared with field reports and hard evidence to reconcile modern observations with observations from the source document, compensating for unavoidable religious and cultural biases. Ultimately, a synthesis produces predictions about this class of entity along with recommended practices.*

The *Pnakotic Manuscripts* were translated from a reputed source text, *Pnakotica,* by an unknown hand, referred to by some scholars as ‘Author P.’ Despite their unusually dry and objective tone, the lens of a 15th century scholar, most likely of religious education, cannot be disregarded when considering the accuracy of the text. Given that *Pnakotica* is (allegedly) of Greek origin, the multiple layers of translation, giving us two entirely separate sets of linguistic distortion, must be considered as a reason for caution with any practices set forth.

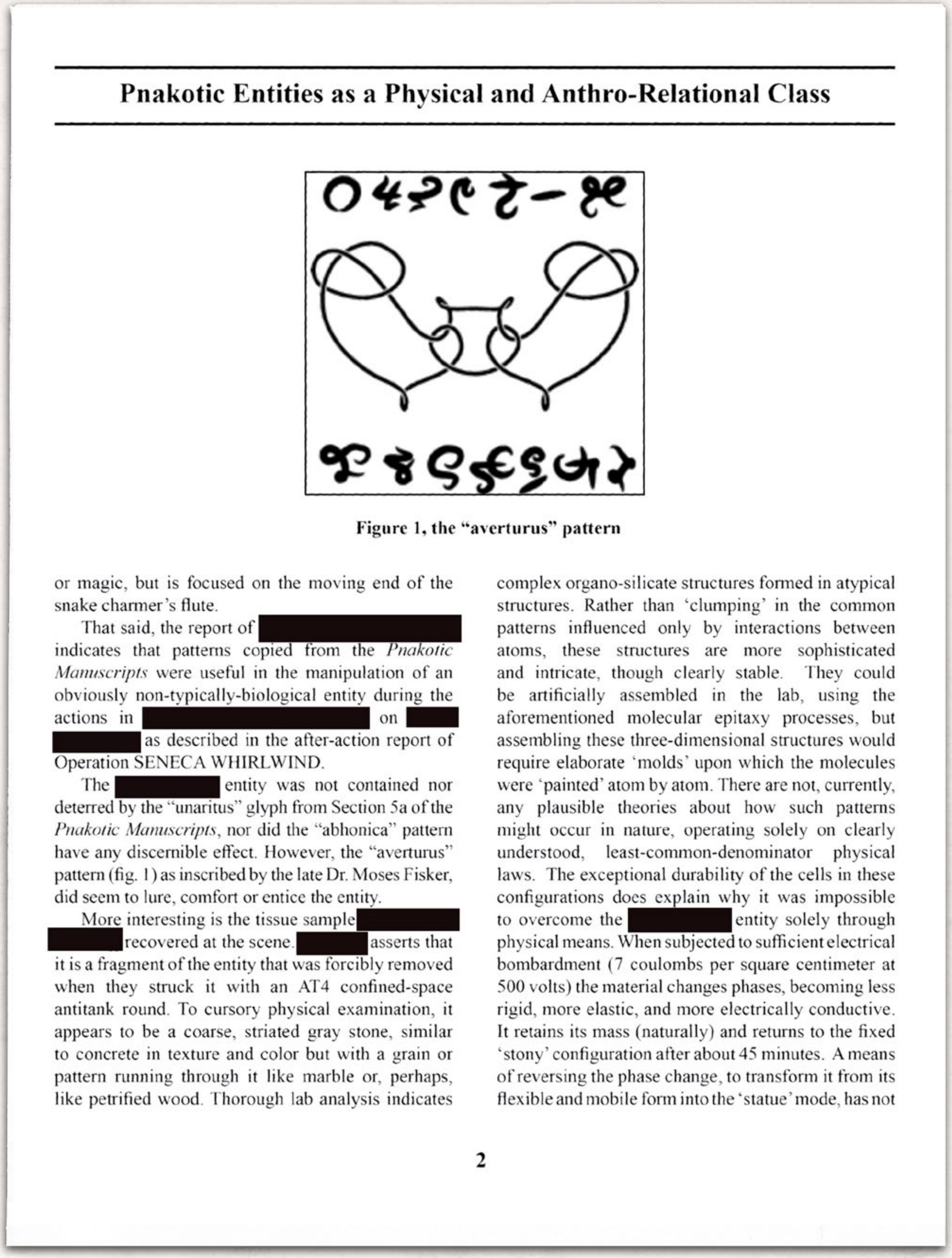
The *Pnakotic Manuscripts* refer to the entities as gods, and attribute conscious agendas to them. However, the *Manuscripts* also affirm that their primary goal is to literally, physically feed on human tissues, most often blood. When fed, they may initiate visions or “gift the Beloved Chosen with the sleep that is not slumber.” If starved, they become dormant, “immobile and indestructible, like unto a carven idol.”

One hypothesis is that these beings, however foreign their origins, are simply living animals. Parasites in the Earthly insect kingdom are capable of altering behavior, such as *Toxoplasma gondii* (which deadens rats‘ fear response to cats) or more elaborately, the Acanthocephala worms which can make host insects or crustaceans passively present themselves to predators. Compared to that sort of activity alteration, discharging a substance that makes a food species (humans) docile or distracted seems plausible.

Another interesting aspect of the Pnakotic myths is the consistent description of entities ‘turning to stone’ for extended periods, only to revive after many years when fed. While flesh that petrifies seems to lie in the realm of myth, molecular beam epitaxy has produced thin layers of materials whose deposited atoms line up (or are shaped by) the substrate layer on which they are deposited, instead of clumping into the more traditional crystal distillates found in nature. In pseudomorphic phases, materials demonstrate radically different physical properties, both in terms of conductivity and elasticity. Matter that could transition between these phases would retain its mass, but behave very differently, even without the change of temperature or pressure usually required to alter a state between liquid and solid. However, what could trigger such a process is, at the current time, subject only to pure conjecture.

A final issue is the *Manuscript’s* claims that these entities can be influenced by ‘spells’ and ‘glyphs.’ If one accepts the premise that these beings are, in fact, in some sense ‘divine,’ the idea that mere human efforts could compel them seems ludicrous. Even the ‘mere animal’ hypothesis makes spells of influence seem unlikely. But patterns of response that arise from particular stimulus are common in all living things, and when viewed through a religious lens might well seem crucially supernatural. Consider, for example, a lion recoiling from a tamer’s chair. We now know that the brain of a big cat is overwhelmed when trying to track four or more moving objects: The chair is used because it is a common handheld object that can readily have four points (the legs) moving at the same time. To someone ignorant of the lion’s neurology, the chair seems to have totemic powers. Similarly, a ‘charmed’ cobra isn’t entranced by music

Pnakotic Entities Report Page 2



Pnakotic Entities as a Physical and Anthro-Relational Class

Figure 1, the "averturus" pattern

or magic, but is focused on the moving end of the snake charmer's flute.

That said, the report of [redacted] indicates that patterns copied from the *Pnakotic Manuscripts* were useful in the manipulation of an obviously non-typically-biological entity during the actions in [redacted] on [redacted] [redacted] as described in the after-action report of Operation SENECA WHIRLWIND.

The [redacted] entity was not contained nor deterred by the "unaritus" glyph from Section 5a of the *Pnakotic Manuscripts*, nor did the "abhonica" pattern have any discernible effect. However, the "averturus" pattern (fig. 1) as inscribed by the late Dr. Moses Fisker, did seem to lure, comfort or entice the entity.

More interesting is the tissue sample [redacted] [redacted] recovered at the scene. [redacted] asserts that it is a fragment of the entity that was forcibly removed when they struck it with an AT4 confined-space antitank round. To cursory physical examination, it appears to be a coarse, striated gray stone, similar to concrete in texture and color but with a grain or pattern running through it like marble or, perhaps, like petrified wood. Thorough lab analysis indicates complex organo-silicate structures formed in atypical structures. Rather than 'clumping' in the common patterns influenced only by interactions between atoms, these structures are more sophisticated and intricate, though clearly stable. They could be artificially assembled in the lab, using the aforementioned molecular epitaxy processes, but assembling these three-dimensional structures would require elaborate 'molds' upon which the molecules were 'painted' atom by atom. There are not, currently, any plausible theories about how such patterns might occur in nature, operating solely on clearly understood, least-common-denominator physical laws. The exceptional durability of the cells in these configurations does explain why it was impossible to overcome the [redacted] entity solely through physical means. When subjected to sufficient electrical bombardment (7 coulombs per square centimeter at 500 volts) the material changes phases, becoming less rigid, more elastic, and more electrically conductive. It retains its mass (naturally) and returns to the fixed 'stony' configuration after about 45 minutes. A means of reversing the phase change, to transform it from its flexible and mobile form into the 'statue' mode, has not